

**Islam and Indian Nationalism**  
**Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad**



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## **Reflections on Abul Kalam Azad**

*Edited by*  
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یہ سخن جو ہم نے رقم کیے یہ ہیں سب ورق تری یاد کے  
کوئی لمحہ صبح وصال کا کئی شام ہجر کی مدتیں

چلو آؤ تم کو دکھائیں ہم جو بچا ہے مقتل شہر میں  
یہ مزار اہل صفا کے ہیں یہ ہیں اہل صدق کی تربتیں



## Preface

In December 1989 an international conference was convened at the Department of History, Jamia Millia Islamia, in collaboration with the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi. This volume includes versions of papers presented there. Those who participated and their institutional affiliations included the following: Asghar Abbas and Waheed Akhtar (Aligarh Muslim University); Ali Ashraf (Aligarh); Mujeeb Ashraf (Jamia Millia Islamia); Suranjan Das (University of Calcutta); V.N. Datta (University of Kurukshetra); A.A. Engineer (Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay); Imadul Hasan Faruqi (Jamia Millia Islamia); Shamsur Rahman Faruqi (Delhi); Shamim Hanfi (Jamia Millia Islamia); Mushirul Haq (University of Kashmir); Mohammad Hasan (Jawaharlal Nehru University); Iqbal Husain (Aligarh Muslim University); Syed Jamaluddin (Jamia Millia Islamia); Mohammad Ishaq Khan (Kashmir); Rasheeduddin Khan (Jamia Millia Islamia); S.R. Kidwai (Jawaharlal Nehru University); Saleem Kidwai (University of Kashmir); Ravinder Kumar (Nehru Memorial Museum & Library); Gail Minault (University of Austin, Texas); K.P. Mishra (University of Gorakhpur); Bimal Prasad (Jawaharlal Nehru University); Qamar Rais (University of Delhi); Farzana Shaikh (Clare Hall, Cambridge); S.A.J. Tirmizi (Delhi); C.W. Troll (Birmingham). Aijaz Ahmad of the University of Rutgers was not able to attend the conference but has kindly agreed to contribute to this volume.

The conference was funded by UNESCO and generously supported by the Jamia Millia Islamia and the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library. For his encouragement and intellectual support I wish to express my gratitude to Professor Ravinder Kumar, Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum & Library. This sentiment is no doubt shared by my colleagues in the Department of History, who have greatly benefited from his scholarly interventions and his unstinted support to the activities of

the department.

The Office of the Registrar was a source of much help. I wish to thank Khwaja M. Shahid and Inayatullah for their assistance.

I am deeply grateful to my colleagues for their active support. Professor S.N. Sinha, Head of the Department, gave me a free hand in organising the conference and performed many chores. Refaat Ali Khan, Narayani Gupta, Mujeeb Ashraf, Syed Azizuddin Husain, Syed Jamaluddin, Sunita and Inayat Zaidi, G.P. Sharma and Ravindran Gopinath were tremendously helpful. Shakir, our efficient and reliable office-assistant, worked laboriously for several weeks. So did Bahadur. It has always been a pleasure working with them. My grateful thanks to all of them.

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## Contents

	<i>Preface</i>	vii
	<i>Note on Contributors</i>	x
1	Introduction Mushirul Hasan	1
2	The Elusive Maulana: Reflections on Writing Azad's Biography Gail Minault	17
3	Abul Kalam Azad and Sarmad, The Martyr Christian W. Troll	28
4	Liberative Elements in Maulana Azad's Theology Asghar Ali Engineer	43
5	Masala-e Zakat Mohammed Zakir and Mushirul Hasan	49
6	Azad and Iqbal: The Quest for the Islamic 'Good' Farzana Shaikh	59
7	Secular and Communitarian Representations of Indian Nationalism: Ideology and Praxis of Azad and Mohamed Ali Mushirul Hasan	77
8	Appraisal of Azad's Religio-Political Trajectory Ali Ashraf	100
9	Azad's Careers: Roads Taken and not Taken Aijaz Ahmad	122
	<i>Glossary and Explanatory Notes</i>	176
	<i>Index</i>	183

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## **Introduction**

**Mushirul Hasan**

**A British historian of South Asia has recently observed:**

... As the second half of the century has worn on it has become noticeable how differently those who supported the movement for Pakistan have come to be remembered as compared with those who devoted themselves to Indian nationalism. Iqbal's tomb of sandstone, lapis lazuli and white marble, which stands before the main gates of the Badshahi mosque in Lahore, is a place of pilgrimage. Jinnah's Mazar... is a symbol of Pakistan's identity and one of the first places to which the visitor to Karachi will be taken. Azad's mausoleum before Delhi's Juma Masjid, on the other hand, is not greatly frequented. . . Ansari, moreover, seems almost entirely forgotten: although I have visited the Jamia Millia Islamia a fair number of times, I had to read the biography under review (Mushirul Hasan, *A Nationalist Conscience: M.A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj*, Delhi: Manohar, 1987) to learn that he is buried there ... The relative neglect of the tombs of Azad and Ansari suggests that many Indian Muslim may have lost interest in keeping their memories alive. It also suggests that Indian society as a whole may no longer value, as before, and perhaps may not even know, the principles for which they stood.<sup>1</sup>

The neglect, so vividly described by Francis Robinson, is by no means confined to Ansari and Azad. It extends to a corpus of a liberal and secular intellectual tradition and to its individual protagonists. Scholars at the prestigious Aligarh Muslim University, for example, seem insensitive to the ideological context provided by the Aligarh movement, a context which can scarcely be torn apart from their reactions to present-day issues relating to education, social reforms and political processes. There is no scholarly evidence to indicate their awareness of the intellectual awakening amongst Muslims in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, no appreciation of the pioneering efforts of Syed Ahmad Khan and his renowned associates at the M.A.O. College, whose contribution to the cause of education and social reforms matched the intellectual strides of early Bengal reformers or their contemporary Egyptian and Syrian scholars of the *Al-Manar* group. One turns to David Lelyveld to renew one's acquaintance with 'Aligarh's First Generation',<sup>2</sup> to C.W. Troll for understanding the Aligarh reformer's interpretation of the new social order that came into being in the wake of British colonial rule,<sup>3</sup> and to Gail Minault for highlighting a powerful movement for the promotion of education among Muslim women.<sup>4</sup>

While impressive research on medieval India goes on ceaselessly at Aligarh's Centre for Advanced Studies in History, the rich collections on the Aligarh movement at the Sir Syed Archives and the Maulana Azad Library of the Muslim university await the attention of its eminent historians. Nobody has even tried to replicate, in the context of the Aligarh movement, the seminal work of Susobhan Sarkar on the Bengal renaissance.<sup>5</sup> The neglect of one's past, Syed Ahmad Khan would have said, is an unforgivable sin.

The Jamia Millia Islamia's record is equally poor. Papers of its two illustrious founders – Maulana Mohamed Ali and Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari – gathered dust in a basement for decades.<sup>6</sup> There was no worthwhile history of an institution,<sup>7</sup> described by Jawaharlal Nehru as a 'lusty child of the Non-Cooperation Movement',<sup>8</sup> no biography of Hakim Ajmal Khan,<sup>9</sup> Ansari,<sup>10</sup> or Mohamed Ali,<sup>11</sup> no assessment of the role of those 'self-sacrificing workers' who, in the words of Gandhi, were 'staunch Muslims and equally staunch nationalists'.<sup>12</sup> Mohammad Mujeeb, vice-chancellor of Jamia Millia, wrote an unfinished biography of Ansari; the first and only readable account of the man was by the Turkish author, Halide Edib, who lived in the Ansari household in 1935 and delivered lectures at the Jamia Millia.<sup>13</sup>

The speeches and writings of Maulana Mohamed Ali were first compiled by Afzal Iqbal, a diplomat in Pakistan, and published in Lahore.<sup>14</sup> The Publications Division of the Indian Government wanted Ajmal Khan's biography to be written by a Jamia don: the request was treated with silence.

Zakir Husain is, of course, a notable exception to this intellectual apathy that has marred Jamia's academic record. His personal charisma, combined with the high offices he occupied in the Republic of India, moved two of his colleagues to write highly readable books.<sup>15</sup> But this can hardly be a cause of much comfort or pride. Still, there remain vast areas of research in 'Indo-Muslim' history which require close historical scrutiny from a secular and nationalist perspective, a perspective which earned Jamia fame and legitimacy.

How does one explain this apparent scholarly inertia? First, there remains, despite more than four decades of independence, a psychological hangover of India's Partition, an unstated reluctance to study the lives of 'defeated' men, of 'lost' causes. Syed Ahmad Khan was an embarrassment, because he was widely perceived as the founder of Muslim 'separatism'. The ideals and principles of the 'Nationalist Muslims', on the other hand, were submerged beneath the rationalization of the victors. Notice the highly misleading and grossly ill-informed comment of Rajmohan Gandhi: 'Remove him (Azad) from history; remove Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan as well; the drama of Hindu-Muslim partnership in the movement for freedom is then robbed of its Muslim protagonists'.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, educating the likes of Rajmohan Gandhi is imperative, a historical necessity.

The intellectual milieu of the post-Partition decades influenced the choice and preference of certain themes – a tendency more pronounced among 'Muslim' scholars based in 'Muslim' institutions. Apart from their own psychological inhibitions, there were obvious constraints imposed by the historiographical trends which, until the mid-1980s, did not allow much space for a discourse outside the Marxian intellectual framework. Seminal work on economic and agrarian relations was produced, with 'Economic Nationalism' 'Peasant Movements' and 'Agrarian Unrest' providing the staple diet to a generation tutored in Marxism-Leninism. The practitioners of intellectual, social, religious and cultural history, on the other hand, were less 'respectable' when not frowned upon as 'revisionists', 'reactionaries' or 'old-fashioned'.

Studying Indian Islam or the history of its followers outside the

paradigms of 'medieval India' was not on the historian's agenda. This would probably explain why K.M. Ashraf, endowed with a gifted mind and historical insights, was unable to complete his projected study of the Indian Muslims. Or, a generation of other scholars, especially at Aligarh and Allahabad, were lured into studying the economic, agrarian and institutional history of medieval India to the exclusion of all other themes. The academic or intellectual impact of such exclusive concerns was profoundly retrogressive. The perceptive works of Aziz Ahmad and Mohammad Mujeeb dealt with several fresh themes and opened up, for the first time after independence, new vistas of research.<sup>17</sup> But academic circles in India, unmoved and unresponsive, failed to pick up the threads or to generate a lively debate.

The result is for everybody to see. Indian Islam and its dynamic interaction with local or indigenous traditions is a peripheral area of research in India, outside the college or university curriculum. Not so elsewhere. Notice, for example, the writings of Asim Roy in Australia,<sup>18</sup> of Rafiuddin Ahmad in Oxford<sup>19</sup> and of Susan Bayly in Cambridge.<sup>20</sup> They have written major works on social history, brilliant in conception and incisive in unfolding the complex behavioural patterns of a group in the social and intellectual context of a region. The works of Stephen Dale, C.W. Trolle and Kenneth McPherson do not belong to the same genre: yet, they contribute substantially to the limited historical literature.<sup>21</sup>

Researches on Indian nationalism, on the other hand, were chiefly concerned to examine the 'Life and Times' of Gandhi and Nehru. The reason why this was so is understandable. Who can grudge the massive literature on the Mahatma and his illustrious political heir? At the same time, the historian's use of Gandhi and Nehru to reconstruct India's nationalist past has, inescapably, led to a distorted perspective on the position occupied and the part played by leading political actors like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari, Subhas Chandra Bose, Rajendra Prasad, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Abul Kalam Azad and Govind Ballabh Pant. Do we see them simply in relation to Gandhi or Nehru? Or, should one attempt to uncover their cultural moorings, delineate the contours of their political personality and identify the independent structure of their local or regional support? Exploring the *autonomy* of what is commonly regarded, quite arbitrarily, as the second-rank leadership, may illuminate both the richness and the diversity of the nationalist struggle.

Attention may also be drawn to the placement of *certain* leaders within the existing categories of analysis. Given their identification with the particularistic tendencies of regions, castes and communities, there seems to be no place for Badruddin Tyabji, M.R. Sayani, Maulana Mahmud Hasan, Ubaid Allah Sindhi, Saifuddin Kitchlew, Zafar Ali Khan, Ajmal Khan, Ansari, Azad, Mohamed Ali, Umar Sobhani, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Professor Abdul Bari, Mazharul Haq, Husain Ahmad Madani, Maulvi Kifayatullah, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Hasrat Mohani, Abdul Majid Khwaja, Syed Mahmud, Yusuf Meharally and Abbas Tyabji. Admittedly, these men did not represent a unified ideology. Nor did they always act in unison. Yet, they were bound by a commitment to India's national unity and regarded sectarian approaches to be incompatible with their conception of democracy. It was not easy to arrive at or to sustain such positions in a society that was being gradually polarised along religious lines. Moreover, the protagonists of plural, composite nationalism were placed uneasily in the structure of politics, for they were not just rebuked and chided by Hindu and Muslim communalists but were often ignored and rebuffed by their own mentors in the Congress.<sup>21</sup> Still, they could carve out their sphere of influence, which was limited in terms of popular support, but not so insignificant in moulding the secular character of the Congress. What is striking is how some of them used the symbols of Islam to vindicate their secular stance as well as legitimise their participation in the Congress-led mass struggles. Islam was pressed into service, much to the chagrin of a section amongst Muslims, to unite rather than divide the Indian people.

Equally noteworthy is that an entire generation of public men – from Azad to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai – were careful not to nurse a particular constituency. They scrupulously refrained from identifying themselves with a region or a community, an almost irresistible temptation in the murky world of local and provincial politics. Equally, they were averse to being labelled as 'Muslim leaders', a category which took no account of their distinct and unique position and obscured their basic and fundamental differences with, say, the Muslim League or the Jamaat-e Islami. Muslims they were – both in their devotion and commitment to Islam. But there was no trace of 'Muslimness' in their public life, except during the Khilafat movement. This was exemplified in Mohamed Ali's poignant speech at the Round Table Conference and in his letter to the British Prime Minister; in a sense both texts symbolise the triumph and tragedy of

a nationalist among Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

Consider another example. Ansari, Congress president in 1927, often said that future India, if it aimed at independence, must be a field of co-operation between men of different faiths. But though they must live according to the moral dictates of their faith, they must not bring theological subtleties into modern political forms. 'I consider the brotherhood of man', Ansari wrote to Halide Edib on 5 May 1936, just before he died, 'as the only real tie, and partitions based on race or religion are, to my mind, artificial and arbitrary, leading to divisions and factious fights'. Likewise, Azad affirmed more than once:

I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is 'Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.<sup>24</sup>

Or,

It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally different. It is true that Islam sought to establish a society which transcends racial, linguistic, economic and political frontiers. History has however proved that after the first few decades, or at most after the first century, Islam was not able to unite all Muslim countries into one State on the basis of Islam alone.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, it is extraordinary how the protagonists of such ideas continue to be categorised as 'Muslims', placed in a separate domain of enquiry, often outside the discourse on nationalism. When the Indian State grudgingly commemorates their memory to advertise its secular credentials, it does so with much fanfare as an act of goodwill to the Muslims, a concession to their sentiments. Organisers are carefully picked from the 'Muslim' intelligentsia and the chosen venue of conferences and symposia are, predictably, the university at Aligarh, the Jamia Millia Islamia and the Khuda Bakhsh Library in Patna.

It is equally extraordinary how an inappropriate expression – Nationalist Muslims – has gained such wide currency and is bandied



about to detail the activities of people like Ansari and Azad. Its inappropriateness lies in the majoritarian view of Indian nationalism which assumes the presence of nationalistic and patriotic sentiments in the 'majority' community alone. If 'others' shared the same feelings, it is seen as an exception rather than a rule. Thus Ajmal Khan, Ansari and Azad – all 'Nationalist Muslims' – are set apart from their co-religionists. They are treated as exceptional men, uncommon and unique to a community which was structured to favour pan-Islamism and repudiate nationalism.

If Ajmal, Ansari and Azad were 'Nationalist Muslims' because of their loyalty to a particular strand of nationalism, one must surely, by the same logic, designate Gandhi, Nehru and Patel as 'Nationalist Hindus'. Again, if religion is the sole criterion for categorising an individual or a group, how do we, then, describe a kisan or a trade union leader? Was Muzaffar Ahmad a 'Nationalist Muslim' and P.C. Joshi a 'Nationalist Hindu'? It is not enough to search for answers but to provide a corrective to a highly distorted image of India's recent past.

Identities, religious or otherwise, are created through a dialectical process. Often, they are also superimposed in order to lend credence to a stereotyped image of a community. In consequence, the actions of the 'Nationalist Muslims', which should ideally be part of the nationalist discourse, an aspect of the collective memory of a nation, are inextricably intertwined with Muslims alone. In such a scenario, Raja Rammohun Roy belongs to 'us': Syed Ahmad Khan belongs to 'them'. Rabindranath Tagore is 'ours', Mohammad Iqbal, author of the most secular national anthem ever to be written, is 'theirs'. Urdu, the victim of independent India, is assigned to Muslims, while Hindi, elevated to the status of a 'national' language, to the 'Hindu majority'. In this way the partition of the nation's heritage goes on uninhibitedly.

Consider, how such unabashed appropriation of symbols by some and their equally vehement repudiation by others has fostered parochial identities and widened social/cultural cleavages. Consider, too, its impact on educational institutions, where the curriculum promotes a particularistic view of modern Indian history which not only undermines the unity of historical studies on the nationalist struggle but also obscures the richness and variety of India's cultural and intellectual heritage.

Concerned social scientists need to marshal their intellectual resources to situate prominent political personalities in a perspective

that would enlarge our appreciation of their role and prevent their appropriation by a denominational group. It may be intellectually fruitful to treat the 'Muslim' presence in the Congress and in other political groupings *as part of and not independently of the process of nationalist mobilization*. This is surely how individuals like Abul Kalam Azad, howsoever tragic and poignant may be their life-story, can be best understood. This is surely how a nation, desperately in search of unifying symbols in its agonizing phase of post-independence history, can pay its tribute to a man who was once described as India's *Amir-e Karawaan*.<sup>27</sup>

## II

Contributors to this volume have delineated important aspects of Abul Kalam Azad's personality and assessed his role as a fierce opponent of communalism and as a distinguished servant of Indian nationalism. Some have examined his place as a religious thinker and commented on his fundamental religious vision, which centred on a belief in *wahdat-e deen* or the essential oneness of all religions. A few essays compare Azad with some of his leading contemporaries in public life – Mohamed Ali, Iqbal – so as to place the Maulana at the centre of the nationalist discourse and as a key participant in the great debates on the future of the nation and its various religious components. As with all substantial pieces of researches, fresh areas where work needs to be done are illuminated.

It is evident from all previous writings, including those of Malik Ram,<sup>28</sup> Ian Henderson Douglas<sup>29</sup> and V.N. Datta,<sup>30</sup> that there are crucial areas yet to be explored, more so after the availability of fresh source materials.<sup>31</sup> So little is known, for example, about the Islamic context of Azad's public life: the little we learn from secondary accounts and from Azad's own writings, which often reflect inconsistent and contradictory views, needs to be extricated from the web of controversies. Generally speaking, the Islamic dimensions in Azad's thought processes need to be analysed with scholarly rigour, for he, more than any other thinker in the twentieth century, remained firmly anchored in the Islamic traditions, both politically and intellectually.

Jawaharlal Nehru compared Azad with the French encyclopaedists who preceded the 1789 revolution.<sup>32</sup> In actual fact, however, Azad was the product of an intellectual and cultural milieu that was unmistakably Islamic, a curious but fine blending of the Arab, Turkish and Indo-Muslim traditions. He rejected dogma, rituals and *taqlid*, but

did not tear himself apart from his socio-cultural moorings which bore an Islamic stamp. The Islamic component – not in a narrow, sectarian sense – was thus an essential feature of his personality, the springboard of his intellectual activities. 'Islam's splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years', he declared at Ramgarh, 'are my inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance. The teaching and history of Islam, its arts and letters and civilization are my wealth and my fortune'.<sup>23</sup> Quite clearly, Azad symbolised, as did Jamaluddin Afghani, Syed Ahmad Khan, Mohammad Abduh, Rashid Rida and Ziya Gokalp, a reformist tradition within an Islamic framework. This necessitates an examination of that tradition as well as the framework, which were critical to the evolution of Azad's religious and political personality.

Aspects of the first two decades of Azad's early life also need to be clarified – for instance, the immediate impulse behind his identification with and the depth of his involvement in the swadeshi and revolutionary movements in Bengal,<sup>24</sup> reasons for his initial enthusiasm for and subsequent ambivalence towards some of his mentors, such as Syed Ahmad Khan and Shibli Nomani, the ideological roots of his pan-Islamism and the nature of his leadership during the Khilafat days. Compared to at least two of his Khilafat comrades – Mohamed Ali and Ansari – so little is known about this phase of the Maulana's career that historians often tend to question his own claims to fame and doubt the authenticity of what his friends and admirers wrote. His own writings are less illuminating, because he was unable to complete many of his projects. This is, admittedly, a great loss. 'Fine thinker and magnificent writer as he is, with vast stores of information at his disposal, he should have turned out a host of splendid books'. Yet, Nehru lamented in his prison cell, 'his record is a very limited one'.<sup>25</sup>

Evidently, Azad's position stands out in bold relief in the aftermath of the Khilafat, which is both adequately documented as is also by far the most creative period of his life. He had removed, after much introspection, his fetters by extricating himself from the Khilafat mess and was able to overcome the lingering doubts over critical contemporary issues which he had inconclusively debated in the *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*. He was a man on the move, unencumbered by the legacy of the past, his eyes set on India's future which was to be fashioned on the principle of multi-religious co-operation and harmony. This was reflected in his unfinished *Tarjuman al-Quran*, the

work of a creative genius, and easily the most profound statement on how diverse religio-cultural traditions can co-exist in a composite, plural society that was in the making in twentieth century India; in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, a comparatively subdued but eloquent expression of his feelings, urges and aspirations; in the Ramgarh address which was a powerful political testament, neat in the exposition of ideas and brilliant in its advocacy of secular nationalism. Impressed with the presidential address which he translated in English, Nehru described Azad as 'an emblem of India's unity'. He added:

Lesser men have sometimes found conflict in the rich variety of Indian life. But he has been big enough not only to see the essential unity behind all that diversity but also to realise that only in this unity can there be hope for India as a whole and for those great and varied currents of national life which course through her veins.<sup>36</sup>

Again, Nehru wrote from his prison cell on 9 April 1943: 'I knew full well how full of learning he was, how wise in counsel. I have found him to be also a very brave and gallant gentleman, a finished product of the culture that, in these disturbed days, pertains to few. . .'.<sup>37</sup>

Surely, the political sagacity displayed by Azad, alluded to by Nehru, was the result of his long-standing experience of the rough and tumble of politics, more so after he set himself, through his writings in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*, on a collision course with the government. As an active participant in the Khilafat campaigns, though he commented so little on his own role, the Maulana was a witness to its steady decline. He wrestled with the communal issue, which had become his prime concern in the post-Khilafat phase, and evolved a theory of inter-religious amity through an interpretation of the Quran. He formed the 'Indian National Union' with Motilal Nehru, canvassed for the Nehru Committee Report and the All Indian Nationalist Muslim Party founded by Ansari, and acted as one of Gandhi's chief lieutenants during the civil disobedience movement in 1930-31. From now on the Maulana was in the thick of nationalist politics, serving the Congress Working Committee with distinction and steering the Congress ship through the high tide of the inter-war years. All these years his conduct was exemplary; indeed he set high public standards for his colleagues and maintained his dignified

conduct throughout the turbulent post-1939 years. He spent years in jail, where some of his prison colleagues thought of him as 'an extraordinarily interesting companion' with 'an astonishing memory' and 'encyclopaedic' information.<sup>30</sup>

Azad was so much more firmly anchored in nationalist politics, because his vision was no longer blurred by religious idioms and symbols, his goals no longer confused by his allegiance to the Turkish Khulafat on the one hand, and to Indian nationalism, on the other. By abandoning his individual enterprises, such as the *Dar al-Irshad* or the *Jamiyat-i Hizbullah*, he placed himself at the centre of the nationalist movement. His identity was thus defined in the larger context of an epic struggle; his stature enhanced by his identification with national rather than communitarian concerns. This was the dividing line between him and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. While Azad emphasised the common destiny of the Indian people, Hindus and Muslims alike, Jinnah heightened the particularistic tendencies of his community. While Azad was an emblem of national unity from the *Al-Hilal* days, Jinnah in the 1940s turned into a fervent advocate of a Muslim nation. Once the erstwhile champion of Hindu-Muslim unity began drumming support for his separate state, there remained no points of contact between him and the Maulana, no hopes of reconciling the two divergent streams of thought.

It should be made clear that Azad made a conscious, intellectual effort to distance himself from the Muslim League and its allies. He found their narrow, sectarian concerns to be incompatible with his vision of an Indian nation and his reading of the nationalist struggles in the world of Islam, an area he knew next best to his own country. He did not compromise his position despite the opposition and virulent criticism of the *Jamaat-e Islami*, the *Barelwi ulama* and the Muslim League. Nor did he trim his ideology to suit the dictates of political expediency. He remained, until the end, a man of deep convictions, consistent in his loyalty to a unified Indian nation and his repudiation of Jinnah's polemical two-nation theory.

What gave Azad the intellectual/ideological strength to sustain his structure of beliefs? Did he perceive an organic link between Islam and composite nationalism in the tradition of Jamaluddin Afghani, Mohammad Abduh and Rashid Rida? Or, was his knowledge of Indian Muslim history and his estimate of what would be best for the future of his community the real basis for composite nationalism? If the role of individuals is of any consequence in the appreciation of historical

processes, where does one place the Maulana in relation to India's struggle for freedom? This volume would have served its limited purpose if a discussion is generated on some of these themes.

The introduction to this book began with a comment by Francis Robinson: it may be appropriately concluded with the same author's observation :

... To a region increasingly beset by communalism the life of Ansari shows how during the freedom movement there were Muslims who worked for the highest secular ideals. To a region increasingly beset by religious intolerance the life of Azad reveals how the finest religious sensibility can fashion the most open and humane outlook in private and public life. These are lives which deserve to be known and studied outside the purely academic community. When they are, we hope that there will be fresh attention to their memorials in Delhi.<sup>20</sup>

#### NOTES

1 Francis Robinson, 'Congress Muslims and Indian Nationalism', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 23, 3, July 1989, p. 609.

2 David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1978).

3 C.W. Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978). Two scholars from the Aligarh Muslim University-Shan Muhammad and Asghar Abbas-have an impressive list of publications to their credit, but they have mostly compiled and not analysed information on the Aligarh movement. Still, serious students of history can benefit from their extensive writings. It is noteworthy that the complete writings of Syed Ahmad Khan were first published in Pakistan and not at Aligarh.

4 Gail Minault (ed.), *The Extended Family : Women and Political Participation in India and Pakistan* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1981); 'Shaikh Abdullah, Begam Abdullah, and Sharif Education for Girls at Aligarh', in Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Modernization and Social Change among Muslims in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1983).

5 *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays* (Delhi: People's publishing House, 1970). And the works of Arabrida Poddar, *Renaissance in Bengal: Quests and Confrontations 1800-1860* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced study, 1970), and *Renaissance in Bengal: Search of Identity* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1977). There is of course so much more written on the Bengal renaissance, as indeed on the socio-religious reform movements in

Maharashtra and Punjab.

6 They have since been published. See my edited volumes: *Muslims and the Congress : Select Correspondence of Dr M.A. Ansari, 1912-1935* (Delhi: Manohar, 1979) and the three volumes entitled *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics: Select Writings* (Delhi : Atlantic Publishers). These cover the years 1907 to 1923.

7 The available books are sketchy. See, for example, A.O. Mudholi, *Jamia Ki Kahani*, in two volumes (Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 1965); Shamsur Rahman Farooqi, *Hindustani Mussalmanon ki Qaumi Taleemi Tehrik* (Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 1986).

8 Jawaharlal Nehru's message on the Silver Jubilee of Jamia Millia, 10 September 1946, S.Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984), second series, vol. 1, pp. 385-86.

9 There is no worthwhile study of Hakim Ajmal Khan, a man at the centre of Delhi's political and cultural life and a close friend and associate of Ansari, Gandhi, and the Nehrus. Jawaharlal thought well of him, describing how 'he brought a rare quality and precious gifts to the Congress' and became a link 'between the old order and the new'. *An Autobiography. With Musings on Recent Events in India* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1936), pp. 168-69.

*Hayat-e Ajmal* (Aligarh: Anjuman-e Taraqqi-e Urdu, 1950) by Qazi Mohammad Abdul Ghaffar is the only detailed and reliable account of Ajmal Khan. Barbara Metcalf illuminates some important aspects of his life. See, 'Nationalist Muslims in British India: The Case of Hakim Ajmal Khan', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 19, 1, 1985. The two books in English are eulogistic accounts and add little to our existing knowledge. Hakim Mohammed Abdur Razzeck, *Hakim Ajmal Khan: The Versatile Genius* (Delhi: Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine); Zafar Ahmad Nizami, *Hakim Ajmal Khan* (Delhi: Publication Division, 1988).

10 Until the publication of my *A Nationalist Conscience: M.A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj* (Delhi: Manohar, 1989). It is surprising that Mohammad Mujeeb, who set out to write Ansari's biography, made no mention of him in *The Indian Muslims* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1967).

11 There are only two important books in English, authored by Shan Muhammad and Afzal Iqbal. Literature in Urdu is quite substantial, but is, sadly, of an indifferent quality. For a bibliographical survey, see my *Mohamed Ali : Ideology and Politics* (Delhi: Manohar, 1981).

12 The Mahatma's interest in the Jamia affairs is reflected in The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, in his correspondence with G.D. Birla, Ansari and Jinnah.

13 Halide Edib, *Inside India* (London, 1936).

14 *My Life A Fragment: An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali* (Lahore: Kunwar Muhammad Ashraf, 1942), reprinted in 1966; Afzal Iqbal (ed.), *Select Speeches and Writings of Maulana Mohamed Ali*, in two volumes

(Lahore: Kunwar Muhammad Ashraf, 1944).

15 Mohammad Mujeeb, *Dr Zakir Husain: A Biography* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 1983) and Z.H. Faruqi, *Shaheed-e Justugoo* (Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 1988).

16 Rajmohan Gandhi, *India Wins Errors: A scrutiny of Maulana Azad's India Wins Freedom* (Delhi: Radiant Publishers, 1989), p. 1.

17 Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*; Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan 1857-1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

18 Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton: Princeton University, New Jersey, 1983).

19 Rafiuddin Ahmad, *Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), and his essay in K.P. Ewing (ed.), *Shariat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

20 Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1900* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

21 S.F. Dale, *The Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier: The Mapillas of Malabar, 1498-1922* (London, 1980); Kenneth McPherson, *The Muslim Microcosm: Calcutta, 1918 to 1935* (Heidelberg, 1974); C.W. Troll (ed.), *Islam in India*, in three volumes (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House), and has edited *Muslim Shrines in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989).

22 See my *A Nationalist Conscience: M.A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj*, for the hostility of communalists. The Congress attitude was not consistent. Sometimes, the Muslims within its ranks were ignored and their point of view was disregarded. This was a common grievance shared by Ansari, A.M. Khwaja, Syed Mahmud and Azad. At the same time, there were occasions when they were pampered and catapulted into prominence. In 1945-46, for example, Gandhi and Nehru rallied round Azad and his associates. Nehru campaigned for the 'Nationalist Muslims', a description he himself considered 'vague', (Note to Mohanlal Saxena, 10 August 1948, *SWJN*, vol. 7, second series, p. 28) in the 1946 elections and made it clear that 'the political aspect apart, I am most concerned with what I consider a personal as well as a national question of honour. I do not wish to be a party to anything which is derogatory to my Muslim colleagues in the Congress or elsewhere, nor am I prepared to agree to anything which affects injuriously their association with the Congress. I do hope you will keep this in mind because for me it is a vital matter'. To the Nawab of Bhopal, 10 October 1946, *SWJN*, vol. 3, second series, p. 493.

23 For the text of Mohamed Ali's speech and his 'Last Letter' to Ramsay MacDonald, see Afzal Iqbal (ed.), *op. cit.*

24 Halide Edib, *Inside India*, pp. 332-33.

25 *Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, Fifty-third Session, Ramgarh, March 1940. Translated into English from the Original Hindustani* (No date



and place of publication).

26 *India Wins Freedom-An Autobiographical Narrative*. Humayun Kabir (ed.). (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1959).

27 This is how Jawaharlal Nehru described the Maulana in his tribute in the Indian Parliament.

28 Malik Ram, who first met Azad in 1939, has written a great deal on Azad. He performed a notable service to scholarship by compiling and editing his writings for the Sahitya Akademy. For his recently published collection of essays, see *Kuch Abul Kalam Azad ke Baare Mein* (Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 1989). The first essay in the volume suggests that the Maulana was not born on 11 November 1888, as is commonly accepted, but sometime between 9 August and 6 September 1888.

29 It is not without significance that the first scholarly study appeared long after Azad's death and was written not in India but at Oxford. We owe this to Ian Henderson Douglas, who was Director of the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic Studies. His D. Phil thesis, presented at Oxford in 1969, was prepared for publication after his death by Gail Minault and Christian Troll. The two editors have prepared an excellent bibliography.

30 V.N. Datta, *Maulana Azad* (Delhi: Manohar, 1990) is by far the most authoritative study.

31 A significant number of books appeared during and after Azad's centenary celebrations. Among the collection of documents published are: Saiyidam Hameed (ed.), *India's Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, in two volumes (Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Vikas Publishing House: New Delhi, 1990); Ravindra Kumar (ed.), *Selected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, in three volumes (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1991); P.N. Chopra (ed.), *Maulana Azad: Selected Speeches and Statements, 1940-1947* (Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1990); S.A.I. Tirmizi (ed.), *Maulana Azad: A Pragmatic Statesman- A Documentary Record, 1923-42* (Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1991). Added to this list are commemorative volumes edited by Rasheeduddin Khan, *Abul Kalam Azad: Ek Hamageer Shakhshiat* (Delhi: Taraqqi Urdu Bureau, 1989); Subhash Kashyap, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* (Delhi: National Publishing House, 1989), and K.A. Nizami, *Maulana Azad Album* (Delhi: Idarah-e Adabiyat-e Delhi, 1988). Finally, besides the seminal studies of Douglas and Datta, one can list some other publications - K.A. Nizami, *Maulana Azad: A Commemoration Volume* (Delhi: Idarah-e Adabiyat-e Delli, 1990); Rasheeduddin Khan, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Shakhshiat, Siyasat, Paighaam* (Delhi: Taraqqi Urdu Bureau, 1989); P.N. Chopra, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Unfulfilled Dreams* (Delhi: Interprint, 1990). For reactions to the 'enlarged' version of *India Wins Freedom*, Rajmohan Gandhi, op.cit.; Riazur Rahman Sherwani, *India Wins Freedom: Ek Mutaala* (Aligarh: Akademy Books, 1990).

32 Nehru added: 'That does not mean that he is reactionary but he is out of touch with many modern developments. Most people who might even

consider themselves advanced and talk the jargon of the day, are really quite medieval in outlook. Maulana has got a mind like a razor which cuts through a fog of ideas – only it functions in the atmosphere of 18th and early 19th century Europe. It is always a pleasant surprise to realise that a person whose education has been entirely a religious one, and who is steeped in Muslim religious lore should be so rational and keen-minded. . . To Indira Nehru, 11 March 1940, and to Krishna Menon, 14 March 1940, *SWJN*, vol. 11, p. 446, 204-5.

33 *Presidential Address*, op. cit.

34 Rajat Ray, 'Revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists and Bolsheviks: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Political Underworld in Calcutta, 1905-1925', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1985).

35 *SWJN*, vol. 13, p. 23.

36 *Ibid.*, vol. 12, p. 612.

37 *Ibid.*, 9 April 1943, *Ibid.*, vol. 13, p.105.

38 *Ibid.*, vol. 13, p.13.

39 Robinson, op.cit., p. 619.

## **The Elusive Maulana: Reflections on Writing Azad's Biography**

**Gail Minault**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is an enigmatic figure. Anyone who tries to write his biography must contend with a number of obvious difficulties: a contradictory autobiographical record, few personal papers, and a vast body of published work that is impressive in style but difficult to penetrate. Ian Henderson Douglas, in his intellectual and religious biography of Azad, has written the most comprehensive study of the Maulana's life to date.<sup>1</sup> Douglas's close textual analysis of Azad's major works, and his thesis that Azad's life and thought reveal a consistency and continuity of development, are useful correctives to earlier interpretations of Azad's life as inconsistent.<sup>2</sup> But as one of the editors of Douglas's posthumously published work, I am aware that many questions about Azad's life remain unanswered, or only partially answered. This paper, therefore, will examine some of those questions but not necessarily answer them.

First of all, Douglas's work is not a political biography and makes no claim to be; so there is a clear need for a full political biography of the Maulana. But aside from that obvious gap, there are matters of detail that require elucidation, to the extent possible. Maulana Azad is elusive, often quite deliberately so, and thus there are many matters that will probably never be totally clear. 4

In his *Muslim Politics in Modern India*, Mushir-ul-Haq discusses the conflicting testimony that Azad himself gave about his life and about

his ancestors in three so-called autobiographies.<sup>3</sup> The first, *Tazkira*, was a lyrical work that dealt mostly with his ancestors and only incidentally and belatedly with his own life. The second, *Azad ki Kahani khud Azad ki Zubani*, was purportedly dictated by Azad to his disciple, Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, when they were in prison together in the early 1920s, but it was only published after Azad's death. It differs in significant detail from a third autobiographical effort, *India Wins Freedom*, an account of his political career in later life, as told to his private secretary, Humayun Kabir, and rendered into English by the latter. Kabir edited the Maulana's account, leaving out some thirty pages that were recently released in the new edition of *India Wins Freedom*, but the newly released pages reveal little that is radically new and do not clear up the disparities in the accounts of his early career.<sup>4</sup>

Was Azad knowingly altering the record to fit a consciously-constructed persona? Or are the disparities simply the natural product of passing years and selective memory? Azad was in his thirties when Malihabadi took down the account in *Azad ki Kahani*; he was in his sixties when he and Humayun Kabir collaborated on *India Wins Freedom*. It seems fair to say that some - but not all - of the disparities are simply the result of lapses of memory. Azad was not in a position, nor was he temperamentally inclined, to cross check his accounts. That is a job for biographers.

In recent years, the techniques of analysing oral sources have developed considerably. Any future biographer should treat Azad's works with Malihabadi and Kabir the same way that oral historians treat their sources: Oral accounts capture the mood and intent of the narrator, but are not necessarily good for chronology or exact detail. Two events may be conflated into one, or one expanded into two. An event that preceded another may be remembered as occurring later. A person encountered in one's reading may be recalled as a face to face meeting. One may clearly remember being at two different simultaneous and widely distant events. Some of this selective memory may be conscious mythologizing, but some may be quite innocent. The historian or biographer has to check the chronology against alternative sources, where available.

If alternative sources are unavailable, one must accept the narrator's presentation as having a certain validity, if not in exact detail, then in terms of the self-image he sought to project. For that bears a close relationship to what he wanted to accomplish. Rather than worry about whether Abul Kalam Azad was falsifying the record, one should analyse

his varying accounts for what they reveal of his personality and purposes, and fill in the chronological details from other sources.

With these textual and critical thoughts in mind, we return to the *Tazkira*, and to Mohammad Mujeeb's analysis of it. He calls it a 'biography in symbols', full of deliberate overstatement that 'reflects the personality of Maulana Azad more accurately than the most exact biography could have done.' He notes its religious mood and spiritual force and counsels that one should read it, not with a literal mind, but rather 'under the spell of this [religious] mood'.<sup>5</sup> It is full of poetic imagery and allusions to sufism and reveals that, though Azad was ostensibly free of the *piri-muridi* of his paternal household, which he had rejected in his youth, it nevertheless pervaded his thought and his diction.

Christian Troll, in his discussion of Azad's essay on 'Sarmad the Martyr' that was originally published in 1910, notes Azad's sympathy for the unconventional mystic, Sarmad. Azad contrasted Sarmad with the *ulama* who had condemned him. They stood 'on the floor of their madrasa . . . yet Sarmad stood on the minaret of love from which the walls of the Kaaba and temple were of equal height'. Sarmad was, said Azad, like a moth attracted to a candle, the moth did not discriminate between the lamp of the mosque and that of the temple.<sup>6</sup>

Azad also employed sufi imagery to show the validity, even the necessity, of passing through profane love in order to achieve divine love. He did so in his article on Sarmad, but even more emphatically in *Tazkira*, he revealed his experience of sensual love and its effect on his life. If the object of existence is to break all ties that bind us to the worship of things other than God, then surely the power of profane love – by attracting the heart to only one object – offers a short cut to that goal. Azad's imagery, though rendered in prose, is in the tradition of mystical poetry:

The world, that tavern of oblivion where I had tasted the wine of heedlessness, whose visions tempted my eyes, whose melodies charmed my ears, that same world now so transformed itself that every bit of it was a picture of sobriety and wisdom, a lesson for the seeing eye and the knowing mind; every particle was eager for dialogue, every leaf was a document, flowers opened their lips, stones raised themselves and beckoned, the downtrodden dust rose up to come down as a shower of pearls, the heavens descended to answer questions, the earth lifted itself up so that the stars might

be plucked from the sky, angels held my arms to prevent me from falling, the lamp of the sun shone to prevent me from stumbling; all veils were thrown off, all curtains riddled with holes; every eyebrow gave a message, every eye had a story to tell.<sup>7</sup>

Biographers can speculate all they like about the identity of Azad's beloved but such speculation is irrelevant. The account in *Tazkira* relates what the experience meant to Azad in retrospect. As in sufi mystical experience, love is significant because it calls the soul to its fulfilment in the feeling of closeness to God. Selflessness can be experienced in one form of love or the other. The importance of sufism in Azad's life, in his poetry and poetic prose on sufi themes, his relationship to his sufi background, and his ostensible rejection of it are all questions that need to be explored more fully. Douglas has only called attention to the phenomenon, but not devoted much space to it.

Another topic that Douglas skirts is the question of Shibli Nomani's influence on Azad. Azad met Shibli in Bombay in 1904, although they had previously corresponded. The older man invited the younger to join him in Hyderabad to help edit his journal. Azad declined, but later, when Shibli left Hyderabad for Lucknow in 1905, Azad joined him there and was a contributor to and editor of *Al-Nadwa* for six to eight months in 1905-06. Many of his articles were about popular science, and were probably translations from a similar type of journalism in Arabic-speaking countries, particularly Egypt. Certainly, Azad translated an Arabic work by Farid Wajdi on Muslim women during this period.<sup>8</sup>

Shibli and Azad spent a great deal of time together during those months, rising early, sharing literary discussions and swapping couplets, walking in the Qaisar Bagh and communing with nature. Azad remembered:

In truth, those were times of such enjoyment of his friendship that I will never forget them. I benefited greatly from that companionship. When the Maulana died, many great and lovely things were buried with him, the greatest of which was his fellowship that I have never experienced again with anyone. His delight in learning, broad and comprehensive, disappeared with him.<sup>9</sup>

That is a very strong statement. Douglas feels that Shibli's religious

influence on Azad was limited, but he does not pay adequate attention to his probable literary influence. It seems certain, for example, that Shibli encouraged Azad to write on religious topics as befitted his background and education. Further, Shibli's scholarly interests in Islamic history and literary criticism, his romantic sense of the Muslim past, and his poetic imagination and style, surely encouraged Azad to develop in similar directions. In any case, the relationship between Shibli and Azad, and the possible influence of the older man on the younger, deserve further research.

Another enigma of Azad's early life is the question of his possible involvement with Bengali revolutionary groups. In *India Wins Freedom*, he makes that claim, but I have always felt that this was a bit of latter-day romanticizing. Rajat Ray, however, has combed the Intelligence Branch records in Calcutta, has examined the question in detail, and has found some evidence for it, though he emphasises the 'complex and shifting pattern of interrelationships' among the different elements of the Calcutta political underworld, and notes that Azad's connection with that world is much more certain in the *Al-Hilal* and Khilafat periods than during the swadeshi movement. I would agree with that generalization.<sup>10</sup>

If Azad did have an extended involvement with the Bengal revolutionaries during the swadeshi movement, it would render doubtful another of his claims concerning that period, and that is, an extended trip to West Asia in 1907 or 1908. Abid Raza Bedar has reconstructed Azad's journalistic activities, in part, for those years, establishing that between January 1907 and August 1908, Azad worked for the *Dar al-Saltanat* of Calcutta and the *Vakil* of Amritsar at different times, and was in Calcutta at the time of his father's death in August 1908.<sup>11</sup> What is less certain are Azad's claims to have established a connection with the Bengal revolutionaries and to have travelled to West Asia, all within less than a two-year period. If he was in Calcutta long enough to establish a relationship of trust with the revolutionaries, he probably did not have time for an extended foreign tour. If he undertook the latter, then the revolutionary connection seems problematic. Certainly, Syed Sulaiman Nadwi did not believe that Azad had ever made the journey, but he was a less-than-friendly witness.

More research needs to be done to clear up this matter, but my theory is this: Azad certainly had visited the Arab world during his life; he was born there, and he had gone on *Haj*. He was an avid and fluent reader of the Arabic press; he had read Mohammad Abduh and Rashid

Rida in *Al-Manar*, and possibly others, like Jamaluddin Afghani. In reading the Arabic press, he had learned of nationalist developments, whether anti-British or anti-Ottoman. His accounts contain enough discrepancies so that it is very possible that he did not visit the Arab world at this juncture, but simply knew what was going on through reading. The point is that Azad did not have to visit in order to be in touch with the climate of opinion there. In the creation of a useful ideology for his future career, an imaginative journey was perhaps more useful. In any case, it is relatively unimportant whether Azad made the trip or not, the important thing is Azad's ability to synthesise ideas from the Arab world and his own experience to produce an ideology that found resonance among other Indian Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

Azad articulated that ideology in *Al-Hilal*, beginning in 1912. In examining Azad's writings in this period, Douglas effectively takes issue with Pakistani historians who argue that Azad envisaged a policy of Muslims going it alone politically. On the contrary, while Azad said that Muslims should not ape the Hindus, he advocated their working together to oppose the British. In his readings, he had found that Arab nationalists naturally assumed that their non-Muslims compatriots would be involved with them in struggle. Azad agreed with that proposition, and urged his co-religionists to be in the vanguard of the struggle, espousing the same cause for their own religious reasons, taking their political guidance from the Quran.<sup>13</sup>

We consider Islam to be far too high for its followers to be obliged in any aspect of life to be followers (*taqlid karne wale*) of any other community. They give leadership to the whole world. They do not become followers of anyone. . . This purpose [parliamentary government], learned not from the Hindus but from the Quran, must be made our aim. In the place of inactivity, movement; in the place of slowness, alacrity; in the place of despair, courage; in the place of trust in the government, trust in God and trust in the courage He has given us.<sup>14</sup>

In other words, Azad saw no conflict between being a Muslim and being an Indian nationalist, and this continued to be the case. Consistency, therefore, marked his position on this question, not inconsistency.

During the Khilafat movement, Azad continued to advocate co-operation with nationalism and resistance to the British, and as this was the prevailing spirit of the time, he became the chief ideologue of the



movement, providing it with its religious justification. In his speech before the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference in February 1920, he laid out the reasons for Muslims to support non-co-operation. Later published as *Masala-e Khilafat wa Jazirat al-Arab*, this speech was a lengthy analysis of the institution of the Khilafat, the challenges then facing it, and the action incumbent upon Indian Muslims, with arguments gleaned from the Quran and *Hadith*. Beginning with a definition of the Khilafat as the worldly line of succession to the Prophet, he declared that the purpose of the institution was to organise and lead the Muslim community in the right path, to establish justice, to bring about peace, and to spread God's word in the world. For this, it was absolutely necessary that the Khalifa possess temporal power. The duty of all Muslims, therefore, was to uphold and defend the institution of the Khilafat against its non-Muslim enemies by means of *jihad*. He emphasised, however, that *jihad* did not necessarily mean violence; its real meaning was struggle, which could be through peaceful means, through the pen and the power of speech in place of the sword. Whatever form it took, it was an absolutely binding duty when the unity of Islam was being threatened.<sup>15</sup>

He then took up the reasons for struggle against the British: They allow us to pray, a religious duty, but they will not allow us to uphold the temporal power of the Khilafat, a more important religious duty. They allow us to perform the pilgrimage, but they pay no attention to our cries when they compel the Khalifa to hand over the pilgrimage places to non-Muslims. They are proud of their religious neutrality, but call us seditious when we object to their blatant transgression of that neutrality. He then drew a contrast between those non-Muslims who - like the British - invade Muslim lands and threaten Islam and those non-Muslims who - like the Hindus - live in peace with Muslims. The latter must be treated with friendship and trust, while all friendship with the former must be abandoned.<sup>16</sup>

Azad thus provided the rationale for Muslim non-co-operation with the British, though the active leadership of the Khilafat movement fell to others, most notably the Ali brothers. When the Ali brothers were imprisoned following the Karachi trial in September 1921, however, Azad volunteered to take Shaukat Ali's place as secretary of the Central Khilafat Committee and then threw himself into a frenzy of activity, travel, and stump-speaking. In his speech as President of the Khilafat Conference in Agra in October 1921, he again cited the Quranic distinction between non-Muslims who attack Muslims and those who do

not. The British are in the first category and the Hindus in the second, and thus the latter deserve co-operation. He went on to cite the occasion when the Prophet made a covenant with the people of Medina, summoning them all - whether Muslims, Jews, or others - to be part of one *ummah*, or community. This was the prophetic precedent for a united nationalism - regardless of religious identity.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, in the fall of 1921, Azad and his lieutenant, Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, founded a new Urdu weekly in Calcutta, *Paigham*. This was a less ambitious literary undertaking than *Al-Hilal*, but it maintained Azad's role as a leading political opinion maker. In an article in its first issue, Azad emphasised that the purpose of the Khilafat movement was Indian freedom. The Muslims must work with the Congress to achieve that goal. They must live their lives according to the *Shariat* and pray daily to God for guidance. They must remain in the vanguard of non-co-operation and work constantly to promote communal harmony. Only then will their future as free men in India be assured. This article makes clear his feeling that wholehearted Muslim participation, or better yet, leadership in the Indian nationalist movement was the key to Muslim accommodation with the Hindus in a future independent India.<sup>18</sup>

Azad was arrested at the end of 1921, tried for his Khilafat activities, and imprisoned. During that imprisonment, he and Malihabadi produced *Azad ki Kahani*. By the time of his release, the Khilafat non-co-operation movement was winding down. Finally, in 1924, the Turks themselves dealt the fatal blow to the movement by abolishing the Khilafat. Many Indian Muslims, including the Ali brothers, were furious. Azad, however, took a more sanguine view, perhaps because he had always been aware of Arab nationalists' views of the Turks. Doubtless also the Turks' action only reinforced his conviction that the real work of the Khilafat movement was, and would continue to be, the political organisation of Muslims in India and their co-existence with Indians of other faiths.<sup>19</sup>

Given his record of political eloquence and activity between 1920 and 1924, it is surprising that Azad's political life seems to go into abeyance after that. This constitutes another enigma in his life. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, between the end of the Khilafat movement in 1924 and Dr M.A. Ansari's death in 1936, where was he and what was he doing? During this time, he was working on his *Tarjuman al-Quran*, to be sure. But he seems to disappear completely from the political scene. This is a big gap in Douglas's book, and we

need to know more about Azad's politics at that time, particularly the origins of his growing opposition to Jinnah's views and actions.

When Azad, at the time of the Cabinet Mission in 1946, stated his reasons for supporting the Congress and rejecting the idea of Pakistan, he did not repeat his earlier arguments from *Al-Hilal* and the Khilafat movement based on the Prophet's covenant with non-Muslims at Medina. Instead, he argued in terms of the best interests of Muslims. He said that the Pakistan solution would not remedy the ills of Muslims. He commented on the Muslim League scheme:

I have examined its likely effect upon the fortunes of Muslims in India. . . I have come to the conclusion that it is harmful not only for India as a whole but for Muslims in particular. And in fact it creates more problems than it solves. . . Two States confronting one another offer no solution to the problem of one another's minorities but only lead to retribution and reprisals by introducing a system of mutual hostages. . .

Elsewhere in this remarkably prescient statement, Azad said that the whole idea of dividing territories into 'pure' (*pak*) and 'impure' went against his grain and repudiated the very spirit of Islam. He regarded Pakistan as 'a symbol of defeatism. . . a confession that Indian Muslims cannot hold their own in India as a whole. . . a sure sign of cowardice'.<sup>20</sup>

After the formation of Pakistan, Azad cited the lessons of history which taught that Islam, on its own, could not unite all Muslims into one state. He doubted whether East and West Pakistan could overcome their differences and become one nation, but he accepted that Pakistan was a fact and that India and Pakistan should develop friendly relations and co-operate with each other.<sup>21</sup> These statements give evidence of Azad's historical realism that recognised the need for the co-existence of religions in civil politics. He no longer relied on specific Quranic arguments, but he nevertheless remained faithful to his larger Islamic instincts. His words contain lessons that are still valid today, no less than they were in his time.

When I first began working on Azad's life, or rather Douglas's life of Azad, I was troubled by the difficulties of fathoming this very complex individual. By the time I was finished, I had gained new respect and admiration for this man of deep faith and firm principle. There is much more that could be said about the elusiveness of Azad's biographical record; the questions raised here are only a few of the ones

that require answers. Douglas provided one kind of a biography, but the political assessment of Azad's life is long overdue.

### NOTES

- 1 Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* (eds.) Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- 2 Ibid., p. 155; cf. Hafeez Malik, *Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1963), pp. 269-71; L.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, 610-1947* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), p. 258.
- 3 Mushir-Ul Haq, *Muslim Politics in Modern India* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1970), pp. 51-71.
- 4 Abul Kalam Azad, *Tazkira* (2nd edn. Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1968); *Idem.*, as dictated to Abdur Razzaq Mahhabadi, *Azad ki Kahani Khud Azad ki Zubani* (Delhi: Maktaba-e-Ishaat al-Quran, 1965); *Idem.*, *India Wins Freedom* (Complete version. Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988).
- 5 M. Mujeeb, 'The Tadhkirah: A Biography in Symbols,' in H. Kabir (ed.), *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Memorial Volume* (Bombay: Asia, 1959), p. 136.
- 6 C.W. Troll, Editorial conclusion to Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 288; *Idem.*, 'Abul Kalam Azad's Sarmad the Martyr,' in C. Shackle (ed.), *Urdu and Muslim South Asia* (London: SOAS, 1989), pp. 113-128.
- 7 Azad, *Tazkira*, pp. 321-26; tr. in Mujeeb, 'The Tadhkirah,' pp. 147-48.
- 8 Farid Wajidi's *Al-Marat al-Muslimat* (Cairo: 1901-02) was tr. into Urdu by Azad and published in abridged form in *An-Nadwa* in three instalments (Nov. 1905, Dec. 1905, Jan. 1906). In book form in Urdu it is entitled *Musubman Aurat*.
- 9 *Azad ki Kahani*, pp. 291-92.
- 10 Rajat Ray, 'Revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists, and Bolsheviks: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Political Underworld of Calcutta, 1905-1925,' in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (2nd edn., New Delhi: Manohar, 1985), pp. 101-24.
- 11 Abid Raza Bedar, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* (Rampur: Institute of Oriental Research, 1968), pp. 82-83.
- 12 For a more extended examination of this whole question, see Douglas, *Azad*, pp. 77-87, and footnotes.
- 13 For a detailed discussion of Azad's position in *Al-Hilal* on co-operation with the Hindus, see Douglas, *Azad*, pp. 141-47.
- 14 *Al-Hilal*, 1 (8): 9.
- 15 Abul Kalam Azad, *Masala-e Khilafat wa Jazirat al-Arab* (Calcutta: Al-Balagh Press, 1920); English tr. by Mirza Abdul Qadir Beg, *Khilafat and Jazirat al-Arab* (Bombay: Central Khilafat Committee, 1920), *passim*.

16 Ibid.; cf. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press and New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 93-95.

17 For more detailed discussions of this speech, see Douglas, *Azad*, pp. 175-76, and Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, p. 176.

18 *Paigham* 1 (1), 23 September 1921; cf. Minault, *Khilafat Movement*, pp. 174-77.

19 Ibid., pp. 204-05.

20 For Azad's complete statement to the Cabinet Mission, see his *India Wins Freedom* (complete version), pp. 150-52.

21 Ibid., p. 248.

## **Abul Kalam Azad and Sarmad, The Martyr**

**Christian W. Troll**

The literary merits and the guiding ideas of Abul Kalam Azad's works have been highlighted, analysed and critically questioned extensively. The bibliography published together with Ian Henderson Douglas' recent intellectual and theological biography of Azad – although it sets out to be representative only with regard to the intellectual and religious aspects of Azad's life – gives an idea of the considerable number of editions of his monographs and other writings and of the abundant secondary literature on the subject in English, Urdu and other languages.

Douglas has provided, perhaps for the first time, a genetic understanding of Azad's life, on the basis of a close study of its formative phase. It has been rightly pointed out, however, that a detailed political biography of Azad remains a desideratum. In the Editors' Conclusion to Douglas' biography<sup>1</sup> I have drawn attention to an early essay of Azad on Sarmad, the Martyr. It had rarely been mentioned in previous accounts of Azad's life and religious ideas. I was restricted there to only a few remarks about the significance of this early essay of Azad. Subsequently a slightly abridged version of my translation of it was published by Christopher Shackle as chapter ten of the volume he has edited recently in honour of the Urdu scholar Ralph Russell: *Urdu and Muslim South Asia*.<sup>2</sup>

In the present paper I propose to go with you, as it were, through

Azad's essay on Sarmad and to evoke those themes which, I submit, throw significant light upon the overall religious and moral outlook of its author. In doing so I am guided by the conviction that Azad in this essay allowed his youthful literary imagination to develop select facets of Sarmad's life and message and thereby adumbrated by way of, perhaps largely unintentional, anticipating essential features of his own life and outlook. What Mohammad Mujeib stated in 1959 in his essay 'The *Tazkirah*: A Biography in Symbols', *mutatis mutandis* is borne out by Azad's earlier essay 'Sarmad, the Martyr':

Maulana Azad did not change. He did not grow from being a Moslem leader to become an Indian statesman. The *Tazkirah* reflects the mood in which he was overwhelmed with the urge to uphold the Truth, and to carry with himself the largest number of those who understood his spiritual language, who could be called upon to maintain a great moral tradition. His whole argument bears within itself the promise fulfilled in the *Tarjuman al-Quran*, the promise to expound the meaning of the Word of God.<sup>3</sup>

In singling out a few basic themes of the essay on Sarmad I am not saying that they are the dominant or even the only dominant ones. Also, I do not want to suggest that this essay indicates programmatically Azad's chief concerns or that it provides something like an early blueprint of his beliefs and convictions. Azad not only changed his emphases with new constellations arising in his eventful life but, being artistic in temperament and not a systematic thinker, his compartmentalized thinking and 'pragmatic concerns of the moment were far more urgent for him than constructing a consistent philosophical scheme'.<sup>4</sup> However, I do wish to show that significant elements of Azad's overall outlook on life and basic religious convictions are unmistakably adumbrated – even if largely anonymously – in this early essay. In the event its literary qualities will become obvious as well.

The publisher's foreword to the Danish Mahal edition of *Hayat-e Sarmad* seems to have considered Azad's essay significant for more or less the same reason. It notes with insight:

The Maulana himself kept playing throughout his life 'the game of gallows and rope'. During the first decades of the twentieth century events took place in and outside India which must have kept Sarmad the martyr alive in the imagination of Maulana. The

peculiar quality of the literary piece created by his imagination, in conjunction with Maulana's unique way of writing, can be fully appreciated only by people of heart and understanding. Khwaja Hasan Nizami correctly stated: 'This essay is an inebriated and original sermon on the stages of the Sufi path'.<sup>3</sup>

Shibli Nomani (1857-1914), during the annual session of the Nadwat al-ulama in 1910, was presented with the special number of *Nizam al-Mashaikh* which contained Azad's essay. He is reported to have commented later: 'We have no more biographical facts concerning Sarmad than those given by Azad. But he has expanded them considerably. He has in fact produced a full twenty pages. Had I written it, I would have managed hardly two pages. Two pages are facts, the rest goes to the credit of Abul Kalam's penmanship'.

## I

From an early age Azad seems to have been fascinated by the figure and fate of Sarmad. Khwaja Hasan Nizami (1878-1957) who was in contact with young Azad when preparing the special *Shahid Nambar* of his Urdu periodical *Nizam al-Mashaikh*, had pressed him to write an essay on Sarmad. He would obviously not have done so, had he not realized previously Azad's fascination for Sarmad. Azad complied, and on 9 July 1910 the completed essay was sent to Khwaja Sahib.

The essay was written two years before the inception of *Al-Hilal* (12 July 1912). It is in fact the earliest, or at least the most remarkable early, example of the kind of style that characterises Azad's writing in *Al-Hilal* and, especially, in his *Tazkira* which was composed in the years 1916-1918. But more importantly, it bears witness to Azad's fundamental moral and religious values at a time when he had just found his way back to religious conviction after a protracted period of 'search', even of 'darkness' and 'despair'.<sup>4</sup> We are speaking, more precisely, of the period between 1908 and 1910, 'immediately following his father's death in August 1908 and terminating at the end of 1909',<sup>5</sup> the phase of Azad's life so carefully explored by Douglas.

From a passage towards the end of the *Tazkira* and from remarks in conversation with Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi during their imprisonment in 1922 we know that this religious crisis was linked with a love affair that had a lasting effect on his life. However, Azad has given us only a poetic and highly allusive description of this in his *Tazkira*.



Utilizing the poetic imagery of the Sufi quest for divine love Azad leaves no doubt that it was an experience of sensual love and, morally speaking, a lapse. In 'a year and five months' he experienced everything, and left 'no nook, no corner unseen'.<sup>8</sup> Yet, although the whole episode ended in failure and despondency, in reality, Azad remarks in his *Tazkira*, it led him to victory and success.

'Victory and success' in which sense? In that it meant Azad's way back to God. It established a faith based on personal religious experience. Azad's explanation of it in *Tazkira* is in fact a mystical one. As Douglas puts it: 'One must conclude that what happened to Azad at the end of 1909 was a genuine religious experience, which was the culmination of all preparatory years. This experience gave him the spiritual energy to fulfil the political plans he already had in mind'.<sup>9</sup> The essay on Sarmad, the martyr, tells us, indirectly, more about this experience of Azad and the 'lesson' he drew from it, especially regarding the nature and place of human and divine love.

## II

Before coming to the core of his essay, namely, Sarmad's experience of human-divine love, Azad mentions the Armenian or Jewish background of Sarmad and the fact of his early conversion to Islam. He then dwells upon the theme of the *universality* of Islam:

When the waves of this ocean of divine splendour [i.e. Islam] rose, they washed away the erstwhile distinctions based on race, blood, and nation, just like sticks and bits of straw. Then, when the period of blossoming arrived, the freemen of the Quraish and the poverty-stricken Ethiopians, Mecca and Medina, Persians and Franks, the Ghassan rulers and the nomads of Arabia, high and low, far and near, on all of them without distinction Islam bestowed its favour. . . . It is the fruit of this overflowing generosity favouring all that the Arabs, in spite of their being at the origin of Islam, did not retain an exclusive, privileged position.

Azad extols the generous sacrifices of the newly-converted Muslims of past centuries who put the Islamic sciences and even Islamic asceticism and mysticism under obligation. He sees this ability of Islam to be meaningful universally and to invite every human, whatever his or her origin and background, rooted in the very nature of the God Islam proclaims:

Where does the cloud of divine generosity not shed its rain? . . . Just like the love of God, the stuntless favour of Islam, also, was so universal that neither descent and nationality, nor colour and family played any role. The water-stands (*sabil*) of Muharram seek to serve thirsty devotees, not golden crowns and silken gowns. So, too, does the overflowing source of divine bounty remain on the lookout for those thirsting for love: it has no business with lineage and nationality, with colour and family.

Is it far-fetched to see the well-known later statements of Azad on the unity of humankind (*insani wahdat*) and on the unity of religion as a development in line with the outlook indicated here? The famous passage from Azad's Commentary of the *Fatiha* comes to mind where he stresses the unity of all humankind as well as of the entire universe, animate and inanimate, and makes it a point to underline God's taking care of the demands of changing situation and need:

To visualise God as *Rabbul-Alamin* or the *Rabb* of all creation is to conceive of Him as not only the Creator of everything in the universe but its nourisher and sustainer as well. The provision that He has made for the sustenance and growth of everything is made under a plan, so marvellous that every being is furnished with all that its particular nature demands for its existence, and at the same time, it is furnished in a manner that takes cognizance of every changing situation and need.<sup>10</sup>

In the light of Azad's early statement on the universal character of Islam, in unity and variety, we also understand better the togetherness, in Azad's mature religious and political outlook, of Muslim cosmopolitanism – rooted in his immediate link through his mother with the city of Mecca and thus with the whole Arab and Muslim world – with true Indian nationalism, conceiving of Islam in India throughout in terms of self-confident partnership within a national framework of cultural and religious diversity.

### III

After arriving in Sind Sarmad falls in love with a Hindu boy: 'it was a Hindu boy . . . whose infidel eye wrought this magic'. The event took place in Thatta, 'the sacred Sinai', Azad comments, 'which for

Sarmad was to become the fortunate place of the manifestation of *divine* love and where the Laila of beauty for the first time removed the veil from her face'. (emphasis mine). In the *Tazkira*, looking back on his own path, Azad on the one hand clearly distinguishes '*profane* love, and the meandering paths of pleasure . . . love in the narrow, impure, physical sense' from '*absolute Love* which embraces all creation'. And yet, the first, however impure, brought him on its own to the second, 'to the highway of Love', which fills the whole Universe.

It is the pillar upholding the heavens, the support and axis of the earth. All that is visible is Love, all that is hidden is Love. Our vision is to blame if, unable to perceive Unity, it has given many names to the one Reality. It is this inability to see things as they are, this lapse into multiplicity that has thrown veil upon veil on the unique Oneness of Beauty.<sup>11</sup>

Again, in the *Tazkira* the link between sacred and profane love is pointed out: 'Sacred and profane love have this in common: they attach to one and detach from the rest. That is why the nearest way to sacred love is through profane love'.<sup>12</sup>

But, it is essential to move on, constantly, to the next stage. Because to 'refuse to go further becomes an idol, and the traveller an idol-worshipper'. Whether profane love or orthodox piety or the set Sufi pattern – they all can become an obstacle on the way to the One, Truth, Reality, Beauty – if the traveller fails to move on. The fact that Sarmad was a trader for Azad is significant in this context: 'He probably wanted to sell Iranian products and buy precious Indian goods, the gems and diamonds of the Indian mines, envied the world over'. The business of trading material goods points to a deeper, a spiritual 'trade relationship':

Yes, he would have to trade until the end of his life but not in the market-places of material goods; rather in the market-place of beauty and love. There, in place of ordinary gold and silver coin is traded the coin of a heart broken a hundred times and of a liver wounded over and over again. There, trade is such that for offering patience and long-suffering, intelligence and judgement, heart and liver, you buy an indifferent glance, one wrinkle on the brow, one inadvertent look at the face of the beloved because such precious ware, sold at such a low price, is given away virtually free.

*Sad mulk-i dil ba nim-nigah mi-tavan kharid  
Khuban darin muamalah taqdir milkonand*

A hundred kingdoms of the heart can be bought with a half-glance. But the beauties are negligent in this matter [i.e. because of their reluctance to enter this transaction, whereby they could gain so much for paying so little.]

With courage and endurance the 'trader' will be led forward. He will have to make 'the ultimate transaction too, the price of which is no less than his own life'. In other words, the ultimate transaction will happen 'when the brim-filled cup of life is exchanged for the brim-filled cup of the blood of martyrdom'.

*do alam naqd-i jan dar dast darand  
ba bazar-i ki sauda-i tu bashad*

Both worlds are standing with the cash of life in their hands, in the market-place where your love is traded.

*dallal-i ishq bud kharidar-i jansitan  
khudra farokhtim cha saudabana rasid*

The dealer of love was a buyer who wanted our life.  
We sold ourselves. What a deal we got.

Sarmad's parting with all his goods, his home and, ultimately with his life, reappears in the *Tazkira*, but not explicitly as an experience and insight owned by Azad himself:

The truth is that fulfilment for those who follow this path depends entirely on meeting and parting, or breaking and joining, and nearness is a stage that can be attained only when remoteness has been endured. That is, parting with all to be with One, cutting oneself off from all to join One . . .<sup>13</sup>

Sarmad's entry into this 'trading relationship of love' at Thatta thus was only 'the first step towards the roaming of the desert' and, Azad adds:

This is not peculiar to him: Of whatever kind it may be, love is always the first step towards the station of truth and reality (*aur Sarmad hi ki khususiyyat nahin, 'ishq khwah kisi urwan ho manzil-i haqiqat ka hamesha se pahla qadam hey*). When love enters, reason and the senses are asked to cede place. . . Those madly in love are not bound by reason and are generally absolved from obligations. Absorption and love spread to such an extent [in Sarmad] that together with sense and understanding all his possessions and trade goods were left to ruin.

This passage, by the way, throws light on Azad's emphatic rejection in the *Taskira* as well as in *Tarjuman al-Quran* of the modernist claim that the revealed Word of God (*naql*) is answerable to reason (*aql*):

Religious knowledge has its own standards for testing thought and tradition. . . You complain that the ulama pay no attention to modern affairs. But what you present to them is a pair of scissors, called by you "mutual confirmation of the revealed and the reasoned", with which you thoughtlessly cut away.<sup>14</sup>

This statement of Azad from an article in *Al-Hilal* read in the light of the above quotation from the essay on Sarmad bring to the fore the deeper reason for Azad's life-long adherence to the basic Salafiyya advocacy of pure and total faith in the truth of revelation, exemplified in Imam Ibn Hanbal's (780-855) dogged opposition to Mutazilite rationalism. In the *Taskira*, Azad reflects:

He [Ibn Hanbal] was a theologian of the first rank . . . he stood fast through imprisonment and scourging. . . For him theological truth could not be reached by the faculty of reason (*aql*), rather, the scriptural authority (*naql*) as understood by the forebears (*al-salaf*) was the only ground on which the debatable words in the Quran could be explained. . . He maintained single-handedly the honour of the word of God.<sup>15</sup>

Statements in *Tarjuman al-Quran* to the effect that the Quran's appeal is to pondering and reflection and that, in the search for truth, man needs to use his divinely-given intelligence and insight and that the Quran, in contrast to previous religions, brought a 'reasonable' (*aqli*) conception do by no means indicate a revision of Azad's earlier stand.

By reason he does not mean here that the Quran presents 'intellectual cases with theoretical arguments'. Rather, his whole emphasis is on his conviction that the Quran speaks to man's deepest emotions, his innermost nature, which is part of the system of divine nature and mercy, in other words, divine love. After illustrating Quranic arguments for the divine unity, revelation, and the life hereafter, Azad says that 'these are not questions requiring logical discussion or argument. The Quran convinces rather, by its direct method of address'.<sup>16</sup>

Quite in line with Imam ibn Hanbal and Ibn Taymiyya Azad opposed theological rationalism as well as the Sufi excesses in thought and practice. At the same time he combined emphasis on the authority of the revealed Word and Law of God as such with a deep attachment to the essential features of the moral and religious vision of Sufism.

Further on in his essay Azad depicts Sarmad entering the state of 'desert roaming' (*biyaban nawardi*) on the pattern of Majnun. 'Sarmad, too, toiled in the desert for years, the soles of his feet burned in the deserts of Sind. . . ' But why, Azad asks, did he need to roam in the desert when ultimately his 'search was for a permanent abode where he could sit and await the final trial of love?'

*bihudah chira dar talabash migardi  
ba-nashin agar Khudast mi ayad?*

Why do you foolishly roam about in search of Him?  
Sit down – if He is God, He will come by Himself

But no, Azad replies emphatically, 'desert roaming', too, belongs to 'the perfect law of love (*ishq ke qanun-e kamil men dakhil hey*). Thus, in the *Taskira* Azad unambiguously presents himself as a member of that 'caravan that knows not where it goes':

No one tells me where my journey will end: I have  
traversed wilderness after wilderness, and there are  
yet more wildernesses to be crossed.

#### IV

However, the final stage of the path of love is *suffering*. Sarmad entered this stage by 'taking to the company of Dara Shikoh (1615-59), one of the heir-apparents during the last phase of Shahjahan's reign.

Dara Shikoh, on his part, was devoted to Sarmad. Azad deplors that 'his image has been hidden by the dust of political intrigue'. Azad's preference is clear:

Whatever may be the case with Alamgir's soberness, we prefer Dara Shikoh's love of madness and his loss of reason. Because in the case of the former we have the sword of sobriety, stained with those killed in grief, whereas in the case of the latter, rivers of blood flow from the jugular veins of his own body. Possibly, too, Dara Shikoh was annoyed with the sobriety of Alamgir and therefore preferred the company of 'mad' people like Sarmad to the assembly of the sober. [He] was remarkable for his nature and intelligence . . . a friend of dervishes and a Sufi in mind and heart . . . constantly in the company of ascetics and mystics.

Dara Shikoh for Azad symbolizes primarily 'true religion' since he was a man 'of spiritual taste and disposition' and 'a person of genuine mystical experience'. In Azad's description Alamgir stands for 'Law'; 'worship of the outer letter'; 'sobriety'; 'reason'; 'debates on belief and unbelief'; 'harshheartedness'; 'violence and the spilling of blood' whereas Dara Shikoh is characterized by 'love of madness'; 'loss of reason'; 'being struck by the wonders of Sinai of love'; 'self-sacrifice' [symbolized by the] rivers of blood that flow from the jugular veins of his own body'.

The depiction of Sarmad before the court of Alamgir and his jurists in a strange way prefigures Azad's trial twelve years later in Calcutta before the British tribunal that had charged him with instigating revolt. In his famous speech of defence, *Qaul-e-Faisal*, Azad said:

The British Government should realize that a Moslem, who is required by religion to face death and to welcome it in the most trying circumstances, would not refuse to fight for the cause of truth. . . Instead of allowing a Moslem to express himself freely and say what he feels to be right and correct, a Moslem is asked to keep his mouth shut, asked not to call a despot a despot, a tyrant a tyrant, for no other reason, except that such statements are punishable under law. . . But let me tell you that it would not be very long before a new trial is opened and the Divine Law is applied. Time makes such a trial imperative. Its verdict will be correct and inescapable.<sup>17</sup>

After reporting the martyrdom of Sarmad at the hands of Alamgir Azad states the lesson he has learned from the history of Islam:

Throughout the thirteen centuries of Islam the pen of the jurists has been an unsheathed sword and the blood of thousands of truthful persons stains their verdicts (*fatawa*). From whichever angle you study the history of Islam, countless examples will illustrate how whenever a ruler came to the point of shedding blood, the pen of a *mufti* and the sword of a general rendered him equal service. This was not confined to the Sufis and nobles, for those ulama who were close to the seers of the mysteries of truth and reality also had to suffer misfortunes from the hands of the jurists and in the end obtained deliverance in giving their lives. Sarmad, too, was martyred by this same sword. . .

## V

But perhaps even more remarkable, in the light of Azad's later teaching in *Tarjuman al-Quran*, is the way in which he sees embodied in Dara Shikoh and Sarmad a distinct outlook on the relationship of Islam to the other religions. 'Dara Shikoh', Azad remarks,

in his search of the goal . . . discarded the distinction between temple and mosque (*dayr-o-haram*). Just as he bowed his head in humble respect before Muslim ascetics, so he showed faith in Hindu dervishes. What person of genuine mystical experience would quarrel with this principle? If even in this realm, too, we insist on maintaining the distinction between unbelief and Islam, then what difference will remain between the 'blind' and the 'clear-sighted'? . . . After all, it is the candle [as such] which the moth has to find. If the moth is in love only with the candle of the sacred precincts of Mecca, then its seeking to be 'burned up' is imperfect (*parvana ko to shama dhundni chahiye. Agar sirf shama'-i haram hi ka shayda hey to soz-talabi men kamil nahin*).

*Ashiq ham az Islam kharabast wa ham az kufr  
parvana chiragh-i haram-o-dayr nadanad.*

The lover is ruined both by Islam and unbelief



The moth does not discriminate between the lamp of mosque and the temple

Sarmad had reached the realm of 'truth and reality' which is 'far beyond paying attention to debates on unbelief and belief'.

Those deciding on *kufr*, standing on the floor of their madrasa or mosque, may consider their 'throne' to stand out at a considerable height; yet Sarmad stood on that minaret of love from which the walls of Kaaba and temple were of equal height and where the flags of belief and unbelief waved together.

*kishvar-i hast ki dar vey ravad az kufr sukhan  
hama ja guft-o-shinaw bar sar-i iman na ravad*

There is a territory where people talk of unbelief also.  
Not everywhere conversation centres on faith (*iman*) only.

If Sarmad for a time recited only the *la ilaha* of the *shahada* – and this was the main reason for his condemnation and execution – it was because, as he said, he 'had not yet reached the stage of affirmation'. For him witness in the true and full sense was the appearance of Truth itself. That had not yet been granted to him. Hence Azad's rhetorical question:

So why should he have declared 'it exists' concerning something he had not yet seen? All those who are on their way to this realm have to traverse this station. Sarmad's crime was that he drank this cup in public which others drink in private. This earned him the censor's whip.

On deeper reflection, Azad adds, like Mansur al-Hallaj Sarmad had to act as he did:

I am still absorbed in negation. I have not yet reached the stage of affirmation. If I pronounce *illallah*, it will be a lie, and how can what is not in the heart pass on the tongue?  
Those who are not satisfied with faith in the hidden world – and this lack of satisfaction is only to be called 'search for Truth and Reality' – want to remove their doubt and strengthen their faith by seeing Reality with their own eyes. Witness (*shahada*)

in the true sense is the appearance of Truth itself.

That was fully granted to Sarmad only in the act of his freely accepted martyrdom.

We hardly need to point out the continuity between the passages of our essay on Sarmad just quoted and Azad's later statements regarding the oneness of religion (*wahdat-e deen*) underlying all the various living religions, the 'unity of truth and the varieties of names and terms' as he formulated it in his *Address to the Khilafat Congress, 1920*:

Truth is one and the same everywhere, but it has various dresses. And our misfortune is that the world worships 'terms' and not their meaning. Thus though all may worship the same truth, they will quarrel on account of differences of terms. . . . If one day the veils of 'externals and names' can be lifted so that truth and reality (*haqiqat*) come before all unveiled, then, at once, all quarrels of this world will end, and all who quarrel will see that what all seek is one and the same.

The numerous passages in *Tarjuman al-Quran* are too well known to bear repetition here. The main point is put thus:

The Quran states that the differences which exist between one religion and another are not differences in *Deen*, the basic provision, but in the manner of giving effect to it, or in the *Shar* and *Minhaj*, not in the spirit of religion, but in its outward form.<sup>18</sup>

These passages provide the theological underpinning for Azad's continuous and consistent concern for Hindu-Muslim co-operation.

## VI

Finally, Azad discerns in the witness of Sarmad's life the themes of *tolerance and forgiveness*, so central to his own outlook. It is of course linked with the theme we invoked first in this essay: the universality of God's bounty and loving care symbolized in the limitless range of the sun's light.

Azad wants us to refrain from complaining about and passing judgement on Alamgir and his *ulama* for condemning and executing Sarmad:

Since the martyrs of love themselves do not accuse their killers of injustice, what right have we to stain our pen complaining about them? . . . The point is that in the realm of love there is no listening to avenging a grudge, and in the religion of love nothing is forbidden more than rancour and enmity. Here the greatest act of worship is to bow your head before the executioner who advances sword in hand, and if possible, kiss his hands.

*shadast sina-i Zuhuri pur as mahabbat-i yar  
baraye kina-i aghyar dar dilam ja nist*

Zuhuri's breast is full to the brim with the love of the beloved  
No place is left in my heart for hating my rivals.

Many authentic testimonies of persons close to Azad could be cited here to demonstrate how unmistakably the Maulana was marked by the qualities of extraordinary magnanimity and forbearance towards his opponents. Douglas has highlighted this point well:

To the very end, Azad exemplified the turning of the other cheek to his political enemies. In spite of all the bitter criticism of him by Jinnah and others in Pakistan, never once did he answer the gibes levelled at him . . . never for one moment would he think of retaliation . . . never in his lifetime did he speak a harsh word about Mr. Jinnah.<sup>19</sup>

Let me conclude with the words Azad addressed to those of his fellow countrymen who were brought before the colonial British Court to give evidence against him:

My friends, rest assured I bear you no grudge, nor do I entertain any animosity towards you, nor do I accuse you of lies and forgery. All you have said against me in your evidence is true and correct, but remember that in helping the British Government to be arbitrary and tyrannical and fight Islam and humanity, you have acted in defiance of God's orders. I know and realize that your conscience is tormenting you for what you have done, but I know equally well that you have been driven to do so under the pressure of need and want and the maintenance requirements of your families and dependents. I know that you are incapable of

demonstrating any fortitude or forbearance in defence of truth and right. Instead of censuring you and being angry with you, I pardon and pray to the Almighty for your forgiveness.<sup>20</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad. An Intellectual Biography*, (eds.) G. Minault and C.W. Troll (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988. Rpt. 1989).
- 2 London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989, pp. 113-28.
- 3 In Humayun Kabir (ed.), *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. A Memorial Volume* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1959), p. 152.
- 4 Douglas, op. cit., p. 190.
- 5 'Abul Kalam Azad's Sarmad the Martyr' in Christopher Shackle (ed.), op. cit., p. 113. Quotations not provided with a reference number are taken from this essay.
- 6 See Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, *Zikr-e-Azad* (Calcutta Daftar 'Azad Hind', 1965), p. 260 and the first chapter of Douglas, op. cit., p. 147.
- 7 Douglas, op. cit., p. 88.
- 8 Ibid., p. 90 and M. Mujeeb, 'The Tadhkirah: A Biography in Symbols' in Kabir (ed.), op. cit., p. 147.
- 9 Douglas, op. cit., p. 92.
- 10 *The Tarjuman al-Quran*, vol. 1 (Surat-al-Fatiha), S. Abdul Latif (ed.), (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962), p. 20.
- 11 Mujeeb, 'The Tadhkirah', op. cit., pp. 143-44.
- 12 Ibid., p. 146.
- 13 Ibid., p. 145.
- 14 *Al-Hilal*, vol. 2, no. 6, pp. 85-6.
- 15 Quoted in Douglas, op. cit., p. 168.
- 16 Quoted in ibid., p. 205.
- 17 Quoted in Shaikh Ahmad al-Bakouri, 'Among the Immortals', in Kabir (ed.), op. cit., pp. 19-20.
- 18 *The Tarjuman*, op. cit., p. 158.
- 19 Douglas, op. cit., pp. 253-54.
- 20 Quoted in Kabir (ed.), op. cit., pp. 19-20. Original text: Abul Kalam Azad, *Qaul-e-Faisal* (Delhi: Itiqad Publications, 1987), p. 147.

# **Liberative Elements in Maulana Azad's Theology**

**Asghar Ali Engineer**

Maulana Azad was one of the most significant Islamic thinkers of modern India. There are several dimensions of his theological thought, and looked at from any of these dimensions, he emerges as a distinguished thinker, both creative and innovative. In this paper I wish to deal with the liberative aspects of his theology. The fundamental question therefore is: what is meant by liberative thought or what is currently called Liberation Theology?

Liberation Theology developed in the Christian world of Latin America. It dealt, in the words of William K. Tabb, 'less with the communities of the Judeo-Christian tradition and more with the task of reconnecting with these earlier understanding in a different historical context, a context of suffering and oppression in the third world. Out of this situation has come a new way of doing theology, from the vantage point of the poor, the sufferers'.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the viewpoint of the poor and the exploited is fundamental in Liberation Theology. This is nothing new of course. All major religions of the world concerned themselves with the sufferings and exploitation of the poor. Buddhism's central emphasis was on removal of *dukkha* (suffering). But when the religion was co-opted by the *status quoists*, its physical dimension was lost and *dukkha* was transformed into an abstract, metaphysical and spiritual suffering. A Buddhist monk Kuliypitiye Prananda describes the Indian situation before the emer-

gence of Buddhism in the following words:

Indian society of the day was divided into the two extremes of wealth and poverty. At one extreme there were those who possessed and enjoyed an abundance of the highest forms . . . and there were others who suffered extreme forms of poverty and depravity. The ideological reflection of this reality was that there are two extremes in the concept of liberation and the path to achieve it. One was to give maximum satisfaction and pleasure to the senses while the other was the complete suppression of the sensual desire. But the Buddha's finding was that neither of these would liberate human-kind since both extremes accept the situation as it is, and brings about no change and that liberation lies in rejection of both these extremes. In order to change the existing situation, he presented the Middle Path . . .<sup>2</sup>

The Buddha, it is interesting to note, projected an ideal system which is not substantially different from the communist utopia of a classless society. He visualised:

A society of prosperity and abundance, highly populated and with a plentiful supply of food. There would be eighty-four thousand cities in such a society. The earth would be freed from punishments, liberated from armaments, and become a righteous world. The Buddha named this kingdom the Kethumathi.<sup>3</sup>

The case of Christianity is no different. It appeared on the scene as a champion of the oppressed serfs of the Palestinian society. As Robert McAfee Brown points out:

This is a God who intervenes to overcome bondage, to ensure that the oppressive power of the Egyptian Pharaoh can no longer be exercised, a God who liberates those who have been victims, seeing to it that they got a fresh start. This is a God, in other words, whose activity embodies a preferential option for the poor, thereby providing the reason why those who believe in such a God must do likewise.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly enough, the Quran provides a similar perspective for the *mustadfin*, i.e., the oppressed, declaring in unequivocal words: 'And

we desired to bestow a favour upon those who were deemed weak in the land, and to make them the leaders, and to make them the heirs'. In this way, the weak and the oppressed shall inherit and lead this earth, not the haves and the ruling elites. Notice that this verse, which is also in the context of the liberation of the Israelites who were oppressed under the Pharaohs, comes close to the intent of the Old Testament. Also, it is worth recording that Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers in Iran made much use of the same verse to intensify their struggle against the Shah of Iran and against American imperialism.

## I

With this background one can appreciate and critically evaluate the liberative elements in Maulana Azad's theology. The focus is on 'Masala-e Zakat', an essay with insights and clarity of thought. None of Azad's recent biographers, including Ian Henderson Douglas and V.N. Datta, have taken notice of this essay.

At the outset, the Maulana points out that there was no *deen* in the world which had not preached helping and serving the poor and the needy and had not made it a necessary part of prayer and supplication (*ibadat*). Islam, however, was the only religion to levy an annual tax (*zakat*) on every Muslim who had the resources to pay it after calculating the total earnings.<sup>3</sup>

Azad described *zakat* as a compulsory levy, a tax, and not merely a charity or voluntary disbursement for the poor and needy. He used the word tax for *zakat* repeatedly to make his intention clear. He further gave it (i.e., *zakat*) so much importance that in the *amal* (obligatory acts) it was placed next to prayer, i.e., *namaz*. Putting these two together, the Quran made clear that the identity of the life of any community depends on *salat* and *zakat*. It was for this reason that the Companions of the Prophet of Islam maintained that they would fight those who refused to pay *zakat*. Abu Bakr, the first Khalifa, said that he would fight all those who made a distinction between *salat* and *zakat*.

In this respect Azad insisted on drawing a line between Christianity and Islam. While Jesus Christ exhorted his followers to give away everything, he did not establish a system, such as *zakat*. In this way, his preaching became merely a high point of piety and renunciation of the world. Except during the early years of Christianity when the foundation of the Church was laid on mutual brotherhood and communism, there was no other period in the history of that religion when

the ideas of Jesus were put in practice.<sup>6</sup>

Explaining the principle of *zakat* Azad pointed out that the rationale behind *zakat* and other *sadaqat* (charities) was that the wealth should neither be concentrated nor circulated among the rich alone. In support, he quoted the Quranic verse: 'So that the wealth does not circulate among the rich themselves' (159:7). In an explanatory note to this verse, he added that *zakat* was prescribed so that the material resources get distributed among all and not become the monopoly (*theke-dari*) of a group. He then went on to cite the Quranic verse: 'Those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in Allah's way-announce to them a painful chastisement,' and the *Hadith* that the wealth be taken away from the rich of the community and be distributed among its poor and needy. Azad concludes that the spirit of the Quran was against hoarding (*ihitikaar*) of wealth as well as its remaining in the hands of specific groups (*ikhtisaas*), i.e., the Quran insisted that the material resources of a society/community be properly and fairly distributed among the largest number of people. It is for this reason that the Law of Inheritance stipulated the *distribution* of property/assets among the heirs.

In his essay, Azad referred to the prohibition of usury in the Quran, quoting the verse: 'Allah will blot out usury, and He causes charity to prosper' (2:276), and commented that Allah wanted to do away with usury and encourage charity. No individual would be poverty-stricken in a community which encouraged charity. Discussing the banning of usury and the hoarding of wealth, Azad observed that the Quran wanted to establish a society with a 'collective system' wherein there will be no millionaires (*karorpati*), no deprived and poverty-stricken people. Those who earned more would need to spend more in accordance with the Islamic spirit. In this equitable distribution of wealth, Azad envisaged an affluent Muslim community, the key to the solution of the Indian Muslim problems, and a more egalitarian society.

Azad compared *zakat* with income tax and felt that it could not be spent arbitrarily. Just as tax was collected by the officers of the government, the realization of *zakat* was a task assigned to those specifically appointed for the purpose. For this reason, the Quran provided a part of *zakat* for the remuneration of collectors. Furthermore, Azad insisted that *zakat* must be paid, irrespective of the character of the government or the state. A government guilty of misuse of *zakat* funds does not forfeit the right to collect the obligatory



tax. It is incumbent upon the faithful to perform his duty – enshrined in the Quran – and, at the same time, prevent the misuse of the *zakat* funds.<sup>7</sup> During the Umayyad period, for example, appeals were made not to offer *zakat* to a government which was oppressive and guilty of violating the injunctions of the Quran. But the consensus amongst the *ulama* and the *fuqaha* of the day was against this position. In fact, if anything, Azad was sympathetic to the idea that the Muslims should elect an *Amir* and organise the system of *zakat* through him. If Muslims, according to Azad, have not given up the Friday prayer in the absence of an Islamic ruler, why then should *zakat* not be realized under the leadership of an elected *Amir*?

Maulana Azad goes on to make another point which is important from the point of view of liberation theology. According to him, charitable funds have never ever removed economic disparities and social injustice. Had this been the case, Europe and America would not have experienced long years of economic depression, social dislocation and unemployment. Muslim societies, confronted with social deprivation and acute economic disparities, could remove the *malaise* by adhering to the principles enunciated in the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet of Islam. One such principle, with important social consequences, was in the form of *zakat*. It is noticeable that the Quran called upon the ruling power to levy *zakat* and to spend it on the social and economic upliftment of the weaker sections of society. Azad, as always, quoted a *Hadith* in support of his contention – 'Take from the rich and distribute among the poor and the needy'.

Another liberative aspect of the Maulana's theology is that he did not consider it adequate to spend one's income only on one's own relatives, neighbours and co-religionists but also on the welfare of humanity at large. For this, he quotes the Quranic verse: 'And serve Allah, and associate naught with Him, and be good to the parents and to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the neighbours of (your) kin and the alien neighbours and the companion in a journey and the wayfarer and those whom your right hands possess' (4:36). The word *wa jar al-junubi* (the alien neighbour) can be taken to mean the entire mankind of those neighbours not related or those neighbours who did not belong to the same religion. Thus the scope of *infaaq*, i.e., spending, was not to be restricted to relatives or co-religionists only.

In the same essay, Azad referred to socialism as a means of ensuring social and economic justice. Socialism, according to his understanding,

was in reaction to the concentration of wealth in the hands of just a few. For this reason, socialist ideas gained currency and paved the way for the rise of communism in countries like Russia. But, then, is the socialist/communist doctrine consistent with the principles of social justice enunciated in the Quran? The Maulana raised the question but did not attempt a detailed answer. His is, at best, an ambivalent position. Social justice and economic inequalities, in Azad's judgement, could be effectively removed by preventing the concentration of wealth and ensuring its distribution among the weaker sections of society. In such a system the right to own property was to be restricted though not denied. Furthermore, Azad advocated the abolition of ownership rights altogether and favoured control over the means of production.

In highlighting the points of difference between socialism and the Quranic principles, Azad pointed out that while the former did not accept differences in the degree of income as *natural* the Quran does. According to the Quran, the Maulana pointed out, without such a degree of difference in the ability to earn, the competitive element, vital for the economic progress of a nation, would not come into play. He quoted the Quran in support, which emphasised the difference in ability and aptitude as both essential and natural.

Yet the Maulana, unlike other Muslim theologians of his day, did not adopt a hostile posture towards socialism or communism. He was prepared, at least implicitly, for a meaningful dialogue with the socialists and an appreciation of their ideas. This open-minded approach tends to bring Abul Kalam Azad's theology close to the liberative approach.

## NOTES

1 See William K. Tabb's introduction in William K. Tabb (ed.), *Churches in Struggle - Liberation Theologies and Social Change in North America* (New York: M.R. Press, 1986), pp. xv.

2 See Kuliyaipitiye Prananda, 'The Buddhist Way to Liberation of Society' in Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.), *Religion and Liberation* (Delhi, 1989), p. 67.

3 Ibid.

4 Robert McAfee Brown, 'The "Preferential Option for the Poor" and the Renewal of Faith,' in Engineer, op.cit., p. 10.

5 *Masala-e Zakat* in Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's *Tahreek-e Azadi* (Delhi: Chaman Book Depot, Urdu Bazar, 1988), p. 170. The Urdu translation is by the author.

## Masala-e Zakat

Abul Kalam Azad

(Translated by Mohammed Zakir and Mushirul Hasan)

Helping the impoverished is a virtuous act and an essential component of worship (*ibadat*) in every religion. Yet, Islam is the only religion which did not content itself with pious exhortations: it imposed a special tax (*zakat*) to be paid each year by the Faithful on his total earnings. This was not all. *Zakat* was placed on an equal footing with another obligatory act - the performance of the daily prayer (*namaz*). In this way the Quran identified - and proclaimed it so - both *zakat* and *namaz* as the hallmark, the essential features, of the Islamic community. That is why the Companions (*Ashaab*) of the Prophet Mohammad waged war against those who refused to pay the *zakat*. 'I swear by God', announced Abu Bakr, 'I will kill anyone who differentiates between *salat* (prayers) and *zakat*.'

There can be no doubt that Jesus Christ detailed the virtues of charity; in fact he advised his disciples to forego everything ('Give all that ye have'). But, unlike Islam, he did not prescribe a formal code of conduct. The sentiments of Jesus Christ were, consequently, reduced to the practice of abstinence and renunciation (*zuhd-o-tark*). Except for the period when the Church was organised on the principles of fraternity and co-operation (*akhawat-o-ishтираат*), the teachings of Christ did not find fruition in Christian societies.

Islam, on the other hand, placed all forms of charity and alms-giving (*sadaqat-o-khairaat*) on the same footing as *zakat* 'in order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you' (59:7). The Quran explicitly stated: 'And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of Allah: announce unto them a most grievous penalty' (9:34). ( And the Prophet Mohammad told Maz when he was being sent as Governor to Yemen): 'the purpose of *zakat* is to take wealth from their rich and to return (it) to their poor'.

Such authoritative pronouncements (*tasdeeqaat*) make clear that the essence of the Quranic message is to discourage and prevent both the accumulation and appropriation (*ekhtikaar-o-ekhtisaas*) of wealth on the part of any single group. The Quran favours its circulation (*sair-o-gardish*) and equitable distribution. Consequently, the Quran spelt out the rules of succession and inheritance. In a significant departure from other worldly laws, the Quran prescribed that, in the event of death, the wealth (or worldly possessions) of an individual would be distributed amongst or inherited by the heirs. This process goes on from one generation to the other, ensuring the dispersal and distribution of material resources.

Again, the Quran declared usury (*Suud*) to be unlawful – ‘Allah will deprive usury of all blessing, but will give increase for deeds of charity (2:276). Allah wants to discourage the impulse (*Jazba*) to usury and encourage the spirit of charity. A community (*qaum*) given to usury would be afflicted with poverty and deprivation, while a nation committed to charity (*Khairaat*) will be free of poor and impoverished people. Indeed the Quran condemned usury in no uncertain terms, because the future welfare and well-being of the Muslim community was at stake. Those who violated its injunction were guilty of declaring war against Allah and His Messenger (2: 279).

And so the Sura Al-Baqarah stated: ‘He granteth wisdom to whom He pleaseth; and to whom wisdom is granteth receiveth indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the Message but men of understanding (2: 269).

In other words, giving away a portion of one’s income is a gain and not a loss. This subtle and profound message is intelligible to those blessed with knowledge and understanding.

My reading of the Quran, the *Sunnah* and the life of the Prophet’s Companions has made clear that accumulation and hoarding has no place in the collective, harmonious social order envisaged by Islam. ‘Accumulation’ (*ekhtikaar*) signifies concentration of wealth in the hands of a particular class. *Ekhtisaas*, on the other hand, means the control of treasure by just a handful of people.

There is hope for an equitable and just society only if the Islamic vision is translated into practice in its entirety. Admittedly, those with initiative and enterprise will earn more than others. But it is equally true that the rewards of their success will be reaped by the less privileged – the prosperity of some will improve the collective life of the Muslim community generally. (In the civil society envisaged by Islam) the

earnings of a section of society will not have a baneful impact on others — it would not lead to disharmony, poverty and deprivation.

The question remains: what, in the light of the Quranic teachings, can create a collective, harmonious existence? This is both an important and a complex issue. I have discussed it in detail in the commentary of *Sura Al-Baqarah* in the *Al-Bayaan*. I can confidently assert that Muslims would solve their problems and resolve their difficulties if they were to adhere to the Quranic injunction to *zakat* alone. But, alas, they have either abandoned (*tark*) the message of Allah or ceased to practice the Word of God in the true spirit.

The Quran linked *zakat* to a particular (Islamic) social system. The establishment of such a system is thus a necessary condition for furthering the aims and objectives of *zakat*.

Like the income tax, *zakat* is a tax. Yet, in Islam the assessment and payment of *zakat* was not left to the discretion of an individual. Instead, its realization was organised by the state machinery through its collectors. The amount thus collected was deposited in the public treasury (*Bait al-Maal*) and suitably expended. The collectors were government-appointed officials, whose salaries were met from the *zakat* funds. It was explicitly stated: *Collectors to be paid out of it (Bait al-Maal)*. In this way, collectors were assigned an important position in the realization of *zakat*.

Muslims were explicitly and unambiguously told to abide by government orders and unhesitatingly submit their *zakat* to officials. They were required to do so regardless of the misuse of *zakat* funds or the oppression of officials. When Bashir bin Khasasa was asked if Muslims must resist belligerent officials who resorted to excessive practices, his answer was 'No' (According to the testimony of Abu Daud). It is also stated in the tradition of Saad bin Waqs: 'Continue paying the *zakat* to them (officials) so long as they offer prayers'.

When the institution of Khilafat was transformed under the Umayyads and its officials became oppressive and exploitative, some people began to ask: why should such people be the custodian (*Ameen*) of *zakat*? But the Companions (*sahaba*) of the Prophet decreed otherwise. When Abdullah bin Umar was asked 'who should we pay the *zakat* now?', the answer was: 'To government officials'. 'But', the questioner pointed out, 'they spend *zakat* funds on their garments and perfumery'. Abdullah bin Umar replied: 'Even so, continue paying the *zakat* to them alone, because they are an important

component of the system (*nizaam*) which regulates matters concerning *zakat*.

This arrangement remained intact from the advent of Islam until the last days of the Abbasids. Not so afterwards, especially during the seventh century A.H. when the world of Islam was overwhelmed by the Tartars and the institution of Khilafat was itself under stress. The question of *zakat* was debated in these circumstances. And because *zakat* could not be offered to a non-Muslim government, the Hanafi texts, commentaries and collections of *fatawa*, written during or soon after the seventh century A.H., mooted the idea of expending the *zakat* on oneself. At the same time, the theologians of the day consistently maintained that Muslims should appoint their own *Amir* in countries where Muslim rule had either come to an end or was not likely to be established in the foreseeable future. The appointment of an *Amir* was necessary so that the Islamic form of government was maintained and not weakened.

It is a pity, however, that Muslims neither recognised the importance of this idea nor the significance of *zakat*. They started calculating the amount of the *zakat* on their own and began spending it arbitrarily. This was surely inconsistent with the Quranic injunction. In fact, guilty are those who failed to offer *zakat* to either a Trustee (*Ameen*) or the public treasury. The transgressors of the *Shariat* will be answerable to the Almighty.

The fact that India was not an Islamic State is no justification, from the *Shariat* point of view, for Muslims to expend the *zakat* on their own. If the *Juma* (Friday) prayers were not abandoned in the absence of an Islamic State in India, why then was the system of *zakat* altered? After all, who had prevented the Muslims from electing their *Amir* or creating a *Bait al-Mal*? They have, after all, set up organisations/societies, some of which have mushroomed all around and are engaged in pursuing vague and even unnecessary goals.

The survival and welfare of the Muslim community depends on the working of a comprehensive plan, envisaged by Islam, for the collective life of the believers. No part of that plan can be distorted; otherwise the entire scheme would turn topsy-turvy. People clamour for reforms and believe that through societies and public subscriptions they would be able to find a way out of their problems and afflictions. Perhaps, they should turn to their own lost track (or, discover their own system that was abandoned).

The night is long  
 And all this does not vouchsafe my awakening;  
 Tell me of my destined fate,  
 Where does it lie asleep?

(Persian couplet translated by Mohammed Zakir)

The economic problems of a community can neither be solved, as the examples of Europe and America reveal, by charitable institutions nor through individual or public donations. A national fund (*quami fund*) and a national government (*quami nizaam*) has failed to remove poverty and unemployment amongst the lower strata of society. The entire society in Europe and America is concerned, nay haunted, by the violent consequences of poverty and unemployment. In short, the generosity and magnanimity of a few is hardly a satisfactory remedy for the collective life of a nation/community.

Islam provided the only answer some thirteen hundred years ago by stipulating (*qanun-saazi*) that a portion of a community's/nation resources be reserved for the weaker sections of society - *to be taken from the wealthy and to be distributed among the poor. . . in order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you.*

It must be borne in mind that *zakat* is not the same as alms and charity. In its essence *zakat* is an income tax levied by the Islamic State on a citizen whose earnings exceed his personal/family needs. The difference from the present-day income tax is two-fold. First, *zakat* has a much wider scope and is realizable not just on the differential or irregular income in a year but also on the accumulated/acquired fortunes or wealth of an individual. Also, *Zakat* is paid on such belongings (*milkiat*) which may be augmented, e.g., cattle, from time to time. Secondly, *zakat* is meant to be realized and used only for a specific purpose. The State therefore does not have the right to spend it on its own, except in accordance with the letter and spirit of the *Shariat*.

The Quran speaks of how the Jewish people transgressed their commandments. It is a pity that Muslims are guilty of doing the same. To avoid *zakat* they often take their cue from some books on *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence). They found a way out by being both a donor and a recipient of gifts before the completion of a year. A husband may, thus, gift his wealth to his wife in the month of Rajab, the 7th

lunar month. She would say: 'I accept it'. As a result, the husband, having parted with his material possessions, even though temporarily, is not obliged to release *zakat*. But not so the spouse who was required, by law, to fulfil her obligation a year after receiving the so-called gift. But, then, why wait for twelve months? In the month of Jamadi al-Sani, the 5th lunar month, she would tell her husband: 'Now I gift away all the wealth to you'.

The story is cut short

Otherwise there was much to say

(Line in Persian translated by Mohammed Zakir)

Let it be known that the sin of those who indulge in such fraudulent practices and then try and appear virtuous is of greater enormity than those who simply ignore the commands of Allah. The wrongful act and devious methods of such people, which invited the wrath and condemnation of the *Imam*, theologians and the community of believers (*umma*), not only affects their daily lives but also destroys their faith and thought process.

Truly, every Muslim is, first of all, obliged to take cognizance of the needs of his poor and impoverished relations. The *charity* (emphasis added by the translators) offered to them is, according to the Quran, a virtuous act. Rather, Say: *whatever ye spend that is good, is for parents and kindred. . . (2:215)*. *Zakat* is in itself a form of charity, though it is in addition to and not a substitute for charity and alms-giving. It is paid only by men of means (*sahib-e istaitaat*). And as Muslims such people are required to help their needy relations; otherwise they would be answerable to Allah, because *Sila Rahmi* - right of the womb - is a right decreed by Allah. According to the Quran: *Fear Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights) and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you) (4:1)*. In effect, while charity offered by men of means to their poor relations is a pious act and an obligatory Islamic duty, it must be treated separately and independently of *zakat*.

In actual fact, the religious outlook of the Muslims, their thinking, their modes of expression and their way of life is un-Islamic (*ghair Islami*). Even when they conform to the tenets of Islam they do so in an un-Islamic way. This marks the decline of religion (*deeni tanazzul*). The Quran laments: *But what hath come to these people that they fail*



to understand a single fact? (4:78).

Another misunderstanding relates to the view that *zakat* or the distribution of eight-annas or a rupee during the month of Ramzan absolves a believer from all Islamic responsibilities and obligations throughout the year. This is preposterous. Islam exhorts its followers not to be self-centred. It lays down a scheme of life, a set of obligations, for the social, economic welfare of the family, community and nation. (Translator's note: Azad does not use the word *qaum* but it is implicit in his formulation). Indeed the pleasures (*lazzat*) of the Islamic way of life (*Islami zindagi*) can be tasted only after the believer is able to meet his wider social commitments and obligations. This is not all. He will also be rewarded in this world and in the world hereafter (*duniyavi and akhbarati saadatan*). *Serve Allah, and join not any partners with him; and do good – to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companions by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hand possesses* (Quran – 4:36).

Surely, these obligations cannot be fulfilled unless a person is generous in charity and in spending. That is why the Quran laid special emphasis on *namaz* and spending (*anfaq*). In fact, non-believers are identifiable because they are *close with their hands* (Quran – 9:67). And when they offer contributions, they do it *unwillingly* (Quran – 9:54). The believers, on the other hand, are those who (in charity) *spend of their goods by night and by day, in secret and in public*. . . (Quran – 2:274).

It is a satanic (*shaitani*) thought that spending (*kharch*) leads to impoverishment. If anything, parsimony (*bukhl*) is a shameful (*fahash*) and undesirable trait in one's personality. Allah guides you towards the path of forgiving (*maqfarat*) and prosperity by commanding you to spend. *The Evil One threatens you with poverty and bids you to conduct unseemly. Allah promiseth you His forgiveness and bounties* (Quran – 2:268).

To believe that all the obligations, such as *anfaq*, are met simply by paying the *zakat* once a year is to perpetuate a view which has no sanction in the Quran. *Zakat* is a special tax, paid once a year for a specific purpose. Whereas we need to spend every hour of our life to meet our duties and obligations towards the society we live in. So, we must continue doing so (spend on and for the welfare of those in distress) if we wish to depart from this world with the Islamic ideals close to our heart (*Islami Zindagi ka tosha*; literally - 'provisions of Islamic life').

There was an inevitable reaction to the accumulation of wealth and the easy access to material resources. The modern version of socialism, which has now acquired the form of communism, was thus founded in the eighteenth century. And for the last fifteen years the Soviet Union has been experimenting with socialism.

Now, is Islam and socialism compatible if the Quranic teachings also aim at destroying capitalism? (Translator's note: The word capitalism or *sarmayadaari* has been used for the first time in this essay).

One can think of two viable economic systems. In one, accumulation of wealth is prevented through legislative enactments, resources are distributed among the weaker sections of society and the State is held responsible for their welfare. At the same time, an obvious reality must not be lost sight of. There will always remain, on account of variations in physical and mental capabilities, a difference in the economic position and status of individuals and classes. Not everyone will therefore have equal access to the material resources of a society. In such a system, which conforms to the Quranic injunctions, the right to private property (*infiraadi milkiat*) would be an inalienable right.

In the other system private property is abolished, the means of production and distribution nationalised and a system of socio-economic equality is sought to be created through enforced legislation. This is socialism.

The Islamic tenets and the socialist doctrines share a common goal – ameliorating and uplifting the economic conditions of the vast multitudes. Their remedy was also the same. The difference lay in methods. While Islam recognises the diverse means of livelihood and tailors its teachings to suit the existing framework, socialism aims to destroy the structures which create inequalities.

The difference between Islam and socialism is of a fundamental nature. The socialist ideology does not recognise the differential economic status of individuals or classes as natural (*qudarti*) or inevitable. The Quran does. It regards the contradictions between classes as 'natural' and their active manifestation as desirable. If each person attained the same level there would be no competitive spirit, no incentive to express natural talent and ability. And the collective life of humanity, which is the essence of this universe, would have been dampened (in a uniformly structured society – Translator's addition). *It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others that He may try you in*

*the gifts He hath given you: For thy Lord is quick in punishments: Yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (Quran – 6:165).*

This Quranic verse alludes to, first, that God has organised human society in a way that the fruits of success are bequeathed from one individual and group to another. Secondly, the difference in and the distinction between the 'high' and the 'low' is a trial of strength. It enables people to test their abilities and to reach commanding heights through their individual and collective efforts. And finally, the Quranic verse refers to the Law of Recompense which is linked to performance and deeds. The Quran frequently points to the fact that *Allah has bestowed His gifts of sustenance more freely on some of you than on others (16:71) and It is We Who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world: And We raise some of them above others in rank. . . (43:32).*

While the Quran did not envisage equality being achieved through a uniform economic system, it nevertheless insisted on an individual's right to secure livelihood, his right to gain and be provided with equal access to resources and to opportunities of growth and progress. Islam did away with all forms of racial, family, geographical and class distinctions, advocated equality in all walks of life, removed obstacles placed by the upper classes to impede the success and prosperity of the weaker sections of society, put an end to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of just a few and insisted on its distribution, and thwarted the growth of unbridled capitalism. Men of wealth were denied any special rights or privileges. Usury was declared unlawful. Gambling in every form was forbidden. Above all, Islam laid stress on 'spending' (*anfaq*) and, by levying *zakat*, the better off sections of society were required to share their fortune with others. This is the essence of the social order envisaged by Islam.

The socialist principles, on the other hand, are based on nationalisation, on the abolition of private property and on the removal of economic distinctions, which are not considered 'natural' or a necessary driving force behind the creation of a dynamic social system. In the socialist world view, the absence of a classless society would lead to intellectual and psychological tensions.

Human experience has not so far conformed to socialist ideas. Nor has Russia been able to translate socialist doctrines into practice. Yet, it can legitimately claim the right to continue with its experiment. We shall know the outcome in course of time.

**Translator's Note:** Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had written to Jawaharlal Nehru on 27 March 1940: 'Translating, in a way, is much more difficult than composing in original. It is not so easy to maintain the literary content of the original writing and at the same time convey through translation the literary style of the writer'. The Maulana should have added that it was all the more difficult to translate his own writings, which were so often interspersed with Quranic verses and Persian and Urdu couplets. We discovered the problems while translating his article *Masala-e Zakat*.

*Masala-e Zakat* was published in 1932. We have relied on the printed text in *Tehreek-e Azaadi* (Delhi: Chaman Book Depot, Urdu Bazar, no date of publication), pp. 171-190, for translation. Translation of the lines from the Quran are from Abdullah Yusuf Ali. *The Holy Quran* (Maryland: Amana Corporation, Brentwood, 1989). They have been italicised in the translated text. Urdu words and expressions used by Azad have been put in parenthesis: so often it was difficult to find an appropriate word of expression in English.

*Zakat* is founded upon an express command in the Quran (Sura ii:77), being one of the five pillars of Islam. It is a religious duty incumbent upon any person who is free, sane, adult and a Muslim, provided he owns property/estate or effects (termed *nisab*) and is in possession of the same for the space of one full year (called *hawl* '1-hawl). The *nisab*, or fixed amount of property upon which *zakat* is due, varies with reference to the different kinds of property in possession.

There are seven descriptions of persons upon whom *zakat* may be bestowed.

1. *Faqirs*, or persons possessed of property, the whole of which however, does not amount to a *nisab*.
2. *Miskeens*, or persons who have no property whatever.
3. The collector of *zakat*.
4. Slaves.
5. **Debtors**.
6. *Fi sabil* 'illah, i.e., in the service of God, or religious warfare.
7. Travellers.

## **Azad and Iqbal : The Quest for the Islamic 'Good'**

**Tarjuman Shair**

It is curious that Azad and Iqbal, two men so closely bound in a common quest for the 'good' life yet who emerged with radically different solutions, should have engaged in neither mutual praise nor polemic.<sup>1</sup> This is all the more unusual when seen in the light of their common intellectual pursuits and their conflicting political careers. Did Azad's passion for poetry never hunger after the *Mathnawi*? Did Iqbal's restless search for the meaning of his faith never lead him to the *Tarjuman al-Quran*? Could it be that their espousal of such divergent politics in the 1930s was altogether immune to the bitterness that otherwise afflicted the common Indian Muslim in those years? Whether by design or accident, neither Azad nor Iqbal chose to leave a record of their impressions of the others contribution to Indo-Muslim thinking and to the subsequent course of Indo-Muslim politics.<sup>2</sup>

For the historian of ideas the loss is great: for to the extent that both Azad and Iqbal each claimed to rely on a common Islamic tradition, it leaves unanswered how, as Muslims, each came subsequently to offer such conflicting interpretations of the 'good' life. That the 'good' life was a life enjoined by God for Man was not in dispute: but while Azad believed that this life was best obtained through impeccable moral conduct, Iqbal stressed its fulfilment to lie in the creation of a distinct and purposeful social order. The fact that Azad stressed moral conduct and Iqbal the social order did not, however, as might more readily be

assumed, amount to an 'individual' against a 'communal' understanding of the 'good' life. For if the collective symbol of the *umma al-wahidah* was characteristic of Azad's ideal, the highly personal notion of *khudi* was central to that of Iqbal's. Nor did their distinct vocations as *alim* and *shair* preclude a common appreciation of the pre-requisites of the 'good' life. For what they shared, over and above their other differences, was a profound belief that a reliance on the text of the revealed scriptures alone would not induce the 'healthy instinct, intuition and spiritual vision' intrinsic to *amal-e-salih* (good works).<sup>3</sup>

Nowhere are the complexities of, and indeed the parallels in, their respective notions of the 'good' life more fully conveyed than in their understanding of the political community. For while neither was known to be 'political' in the sense say of a M.A. Jinnah or a Vallabhbhai Patel (their talents being more richly employed elsewhere), both tended to regard the political community as in a sense symbolic of all that was implied in the notion of the 'good' life. For Azad, the precepts of the true *deen* or universal faith which bound together all men whatever their creed, were rooted in the pluralistic political community. For Iqbal, the creative affirmation of *khudi* or selfhood depended ultimately on its relation to the wider political community of 'communal ego'.<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, much has been made of Azad and Iqbal's distinctive approaches to the notion of the political community.<sup>5</sup> It is commonly suggested, for example, that Azad's was a more universalist understanding stressing as it did the desirability of religious pluralism. Iqbal, on the other hand, is deemed to favour a more exclusive, if not exclusivist, conception that underlined the special quality of Mohammad's message. These differences, it is suggested, reflect their espousal of distinct forms of humanism;<sup>6</sup> their diverse emphases on permanence and change,<sup>7</sup> and their conflicting views about the instruments of communal regeneration.<sup>8</sup>

While there can be no question that Azad and Iqbal represented two very different, if equally authentic strands within the Islamic tradition, there are important parallels in their thinking which have tended to remain submerged one suspects, in the interest of what might be called the 'politics of sub-continental historiography'. The tendency too often has been to see Azad and Iqbal as polar opposites- 'spokesmen' in some great bi-partisan drama where the claims of a 'true' and 'false' Islam battled for the hearts and minds of ordinary Muslims. It may now well be time to rethink the contributions of Azad and Iqbal not so much as men who inadvertently undermined the unity of a religious tradition they held so dear, but as those who sought, however imperfectly, to

preserve it. Their understanding of the political community, its scope and its 'principle of movement', otherwise so differently expressed (and portrayed), provides one way of exploring their common concerns and those of the Indo-Islamic tradition more generally.

### **The Scope of the Political Community: Universal or Exclusive ?**

For Azad and Iqbal the years 1905-1910 represented a crucial period in their lives. For it was a time when both were to encounter, for the first time as adults, the world that lay beyond India. Admittedly, Azad who was born in Mecca, had already savoured something of life abroad but he was still a child when circumstances led his father to re-settle his family in Calcutta.<sup>9</sup> It is certain, however, that Iqbal born and brought up for the most part in the Punjabi town of Sialkot, had had no opportunity to travel abroad before 1905.<sup>10</sup>

The question of whether or not Azad actually left India is, of course, a matter of some dispute.<sup>11</sup> What is not in question is that these years witnessed Azad's surer grasp of developments, both political and social, in the Muslim world bordering the eastern Mediterranean. Here he learnt of Jamaluddin Afghani and Mohammad Abduh, of Young Turks and Egyptian Nationalists, all engaged in the re-definition of a modern Muslim community willing and able to withstand the assault from the West. What emerged with force from these initial contacts was Azad's belief in the resilience of Islam, not only as a programme for reform but as a political movement of some considerable potential.<sup>12</sup> What was imperative, however, was to free Muslims from the shackles of colonial rule.<sup>13</sup> The precise strategy was a matter of debate.

For while Muslims like Jamaluddin Afghani emphasised the importance of Pan-Islamism as the single most effective weapon against the worldwide surge of Western imperialism, others like the followers of Mustafa Kamil Pasha in Egypt underlined the need for more durable national bonds. The debate reflected a growing recognition, soon to be absorbed by Azad himself, that the historical conditions under which Muslim emancipation was to be secured had been radically altered. The demise of the universal Muslim empire and the emergence of Western imperialism demanded new forms of solidarity that would combat foreign domination at home without eroding existing bonds between Muslims across frontiers. One bold option then on offer was that of the Egyptian Nationalists led by Mustafa Kamil who advocated greater co-operation between Muslims and non-Muslims. For Afghani whose commitment to pan-Islamism was rivalled only by his antipathy

to British rule, the value of such co-operation may well have been purely instrumental.<sup>14</sup> For Azad, however, the idea of solidarity based on human as against strictly religious ties, was deeply compelling. It not only offered a solution to the problem of defining the political community in the richly pluralistic context of colonial India, but also helped resolve Azad's personal quest for the common message that underlay the multiplicity of religious creeds.

In 1905 Iqbal travelled first to Britain, then to Germany. What confronted him was not the ferment of a re-invigorated Islam, but the over-powering vitality of the West. Its dynamism and self-confidence contrasted sharply with the decay and dissolution that Iqbal believed was endemic in the Muslim world. Darwin and Bergson, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer were the intellectual trend-setters of the new spirit which so enthralled the young Iqbal and for which he found no parallel in contemporary Muslim society. Yet, all was not lost; for Iqbal, instead of exhorting Muslims to emulate the mores of this brave new world, urged them to recognise that its true sources lay deep within 'the medieval intellectual culture of Islam'.<sup>15</sup> Its revival among Muslims depended, however, on the fulfilment of two important conditions; the eradication of popular Sufism and the restoration of those religious ties that had once ensured the political and cultural vitality of Islam as a world civilization. The first would check the spread of pantheistic trends which had eroded the freedom and diluted the distinctive character of Islamic societies. The second would resist the hold of what Iqbal called the 'race idea', or nationalism, which threatened to undermine the universalist message that lay at the heart of the Islamic world-view.<sup>16</sup> Indian Islam, he believed, could yet partake of the spirit of modernity if Muslims could be persuaded to emerge as a well-defined community determined to withstand the forces of quietism and assimilation symptomatic of political decline and servitude. Yet, it was imperative that even such a community be cognizant of the bonds shaped by a 'common spiritual aspiration' if it was not to succumb to the selfish individualism that endangered Western culture.<sup>17</sup> The global fraternity of Muslims offered precisely the kind of solution for the creation of a political community that would be both recognisably modern in its rejection of other-worldliness as well Islamic in its vision of an extra-territorial social order.

Their sojourns abroad, whether sustained as in the case of Iqbal or sporadic as is sometimes alleged of Azad, left each with very different perceptions about the *malaise* of contemporary Muslim society, in particular that of colonial India. Azad's familiarity with the feverish



pace of intellectual and political activity in the Arab world rendered him something of an optimist. The spirited campaign of Arab Nationalists had persuaded him that Muslims were not, after all, indifferent to the call to political action. His journal *Al-Hilal*, established in 1912, was a testimony to Azad's growing optimism and faith in his fellow-Muslims to respond to a new vision. The early issues were devoted to a discussion of contemporary reform movements in the Arab world with a view to appraising Indian Muslims of the achievements, both intellectual and political, of their fellow-Muslims abroad.<sup>17</sup> The purpose was not only to emphasise the urgency of religious reform by calling upon Indian Muslims to reject the consensus of the orthodox *ulama*, but also to suggest ways of responding more creatively to the challenge posed by the British presence in India. Whether or not this meant that Azad was already advocating Hindu-Muslim co-operation is likely to remain a moot question hotly disputed between Pakistani historians who deny it and others, most notably Douglas, who affirm it.<sup>18</sup> What is more easily established is a sense of Azad's profound conviction in Muslim superiority reminiscent not only of the spirit of an ascendant Islam, but of a Mughal political culture that could envisage, even if it did not always endorse, the 'confident partnership' between the Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>19</sup> In a vein that was to become characteristic of his political creed in later life, Azad wrote in 1912:

This pre-occupation with majority and minority has become the root of our problem. . . Now, members of a brotherhood of four hundred million believers in the unity of God are afraid of two hundred and twenty million idiot worshippers of India. . . You must realize your position among the peoples of the world. Like God himself, look at everyone from a lofty position.<sup>20</sup>

While the revivalist tenor of Azad's *Al-Hilal* phase tends to suggest a preference for a political community that was in some sense synonymous with the more traditional Muslim idea of the *umma*, it is uncertain whether Azad himself ever believed that such a community needed either to be restrictive in scope or exclusive in purpose.<sup>21</sup>

The self-confidence and sense of elation exuded by Azad through the pages of *Al-Hilal* stand in marked contrast to the deeply pessimistic spirit that haunted Iqbal's poetry upon his return to India. His *Shikwa* (Complaint), written in 1909, is illustrative of Iqbal's mood. In it the poet's complaint to God about the abject condition of the Muslim



transcended the narrow frontiers of nationalism and rejected the debilitating spirituality that passed for *tasawwuf* (sufism). The first led him to propound the virtues of a pan-Islamic community over and above those of a common Indian identity typified by his early poems such as *Naya Shiwalā*;<sup>25</sup> the second to combat pantheistic sufism as the single most insidious cause of Muslim political decline.<sup>26</sup>

Iqbal's commitment to a pan-Islamic community following his return from Europe appears to diverge sharply from Azad's emerging consciousness of a common Indian nationality. Yet any careful assessment of Iqbal's work in this period reveals a tenuous link between pan-Islamism and the practical focus of his concern which, like Azad's, remained the Muslims of the Indian sub-continent. There is no doubt that Iqbal was seduced by pan-Islamism – so, in fact, was Azad, although some like Douglas have argued that he, more than say Iqbal, believed it to be subservient to the more urgent task of securing Indian independence.<sup>27</sup> Be that as it may, no more in the case of the one than the other did pan-Islamism emerge as the basis of a coherent political community. In the case of Iqbal, it is clear that pan-Islamism was, above all, a kind of spiritual antidote to Western materialism of which nationalism was its most sinister manifestation. To the extent that Islam 'abhors all material limitations' whether of race, tribe and territory, it offered to Muslims the possibility of asserting, in theory if not in practice, an alternative basis of solidarity which was both 'non-temporal and non-spatial', namely the *millat*.<sup>28</sup> It was the direct equation of nationalism with materialism, rather than any vision of a pan-Islamic community as such that accounts, in part, for Iqbal's growing ambivalence in relation to the idea of Indian nationalism and concomitantly, to the notion of a common Indian nationality.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that Iqbal's pan-Islamism served to justify political choices that came subsequently to be distinct from those of Azad's ought not, however, to conceal some fundamental parallels in their thinking. For what both men derived from their understanding of pan-Islamism was not only a greater awareness of the crisis of a growing Muslim diaspora, but more importantly, a renewed sense that being Muslim transcended both time and place. It was this shared belief that lay, paradoxically, at the heart of their otherwise highly individual responses to the question of Indo-Muslim emancipation. For while the ethos of a world-wide Muslim community enabled Azad to deny the necessity of a separate state for Indian Muslims, it constituted the very essence of Iqbal's objection to a geographically inspired unit as the

exclusive focus of Muslim loyalty.

Yet, while pan-Islamism may well have provided Azad and Iqbal with a heightened sense of the universal dimension inherent in a Muslim identity, their perception of what precisely such universalism entailed for the Muslim community as a whole differed substantially. Its roots appeared early and were well established. It is co-incidental, and yet highly revealing that both Azad and Iqbal should, in the same year, 1910, each have produced an essay that delineated in a sense their vision of the relationship between the 'good' life and the ultimate political community. In his essay on 'Sarmad the Martyr', brought recently to our attention by Gail Minault and C.W. Troll, Azad's distaste for Aurangzeb's brutal 'suppression of the truth'<sup>30</sup> stands in glaring contrast to Iqbal's eulogy of the emperor's comprehensive 'political genius'.<sup>31</sup> Azad's perception of Aurangzeb as a man distinctly lacking in humanity sits uneasily alongside Iqbal's tribute to him as 'the founder of the *Musalman* nationality in India...'.<sup>32</sup> While Azad clearly endorsed Sarmad's repudiation of the distinction between temple and mosque, Iqbal remained deeply ambivalent about the merits of cultural syncretism.

The spirit of these ideas was to re-appear, almost simultaneously, a few years later. In 1915 Iqbal completed the first part of his *Mathnawi Asrar-e Khudi*. The dominant motif of *khudi* or self-affirmation suggests Iqbal's growing pre-occupation with the urgency, and indeed the value of defining the limits of self-hood, both individual and collective. Azad's *Tazkira*, on the other hand, written shortly afterwards in 1916, is concerned with precisely the opposite. Here is to be found a denunciation of the 'Israelite mentality' which, with its stress on the specificities of dogma and its assertion of an exclusive identity, showed little regard for the spirit of a more authentic, universal morality.<sup>33</sup>

A recognition of these diverging orientations ought not, however, to obscure either Iqbal's lasting concern for universal themes, not least the ubiquity of Love and Evil, or Azad's quest for the elements of a more pristine Islam. If, as Mujeeb has suggested, Iqbal's 'concern for the Muslim *millat* [was] . . . transformed into a concern for man',<sup>34</sup> so too, it might be argued, was Azad's vision of *umma al-wahida* an embodiment of what he believed to be intrinsic to 'the Quranic call'. His censure of 'groupism', which made a virtue of exclusive codes of conduct and ritual practice at the cost of abandoning the true *deen* or universal faith, stemmed from the conviction that it was a fundamental repudiation of 'the type of mind' the *Quran* 'reflects or tries to build'.

Such a mind, Azad averred, was one imbued with 'the beauty and mercy of God or universal humanity'.<sup>35</sup> Its essential qualities included a profound sense of *wahdat-e-deen* or the unity of the divine message. In theory it demanded an understanding of the Quran as no more than a manifestation of the universal truth that underlay all other religions; in practice, it called for the creation of a community that would encompass and transcend human diversity, whether religious, social or political. That Azad's universalism was far from the tenets of that amorphous pantheism so despised by Iqbal is evidenced in part by his reluctance to relativise fundamental religious practices common to Islam<sup>36</sup> and in part, by his active membership in organizations like the Jamiyat al-ulama-i-Islam whose blueprint for an independent India excluded any dilution of Islamic Law.<sup>37</sup>

Like Azad, Iqbal too sought to 'discover a universal social reconstruction'. Unlike Azad, however, he maintained that that in order to render 'the humanitarian ideal' an effective basis of human organization, 'you must start with a society exclusive in the sense of having a creed and well defined outline'.<sup>38</sup> For Iqbal, the notion of *tawhid* or monotheism that underpinned the Quranic message was to be comprehended above all by reference to a society whose 'organic unity' would be a testimony to the unity of God.<sup>39</sup> That such a society left no room for what Cragg has termed 'the Judaic analogue' with its stress upon a 'fiercely restrictive identity'<sup>40</sup> is clear from Iqbal's vision of a community that would forever 'be enlarging its limits by example and persuasion'. Such a society, he believed, was inherent in Islam.<sup>41</sup>

Both Azad and Iqbal were keen to stress the deeply universalist impulse of their faith. More importantly, they shared the common assumption that the universal concerns that underlay human society were most fully embodied in Islam. Yet their understanding of what such universalism implied politically tended to diverge sharply. For Azad, the notion of universalism was equal to and indeed synonymous with the idea of *wahdat* or unity. Its inclusion as a part of his political vision led him to postulate a community whose religious diversity would be contained by a unity grounded in certain commonly defined rules of righteous action. For Iqbal, on the other hand, the idea of *wahdat* was neither desirable nor intrinsic to Islam. *Wahdat*, he maintained was a philosophical theme deeply tainted by its association with the pantheistic Sufism of Ibn al-Arabi. 'Islam', he wrote, 'has nothing to do with the discussion of *wahdat* and *kathrat*. The essence of Islam is *tawhid*, and the opposite of the latter is not *kathrat* but *shirk*'.<sup>42</sup> The expression

of *tawhid* as 'a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind'<sup>43</sup> depended upon the consolidation of finite egos, both individual and collective.<sup>44</sup> Politically it demanded the freedom to seek 'the development, preservation and consolidation of the [Muslim] communal ego'.<sup>45</sup>

### The Political Community: Permanence or Change?

It has been suggested by Aziz Ahmad that while Iqbal's thinking 'bears the stamp of the twentieth century' in its emphasis upon *ijtihad* and *ijma* as 'instruments of legal evolution', Azad's was a more traditionalist mentality preoccupied with the importance of *taslis* or reconsolidation.<sup>46</sup> There is certainly evidence to suggest that as early as 1913 Azad himself had arrived at conclusions that would lend credence to Aziz Ahmad's thesis. 'Muslims today', he wrote,

do not need to lay new foundations or to exercise ingenuity. They have only to revive and reaffirm what has been commanded. There is no reason why we should feel distraught over the new houses to be built; we need only to settle in the dwellings we have forsaken. This is the difference in principle between my conviction as regards what is to be done and the methods of my contemporaries.<sup>47</sup>

But while there may well be some case to be made for Azad and Iqbal as the exponents, respectively, of a 'static' and 'dynamic' interpretation of their religious tradition, it is far from clear whether their understanding of the political community conformed rigidly to these descriptions.

In a sense both Azad and Iqbal were deeply conscious of the need for change. Both questioned the authority of early Muslim jurists and Azad was categorical enough to declare that *taqlid* remained the 'greatest hindrance to human intellectual progress'.<sup>48</sup> His bitter denunciation of 'the tendency to lean on the past for every idea'<sup>49</sup> as incompatible with the spirit of the Quran was echoed by Iqbal's concern to show that 'a false reverence for the past' was 'contrary to the inner impulse of Islam'.<sup>50</sup> But while Iqbal sought to revive the dynamic elements within Islam by restoring the importance of *ijma* and *ijtihad* as the necessary legal instruments of a community willing and able to adapt to 'the growth of the republican spirit',<sup>51</sup> Azad tended to remain ambivalent about their intrinsic merits in relation to what he deemed to be the primary source

of law, namely the Quran. Yet it is doubtful whether what Aziz Ahmad has termed Azad's 'uncompromising indifference' to such notions as *ijma* and *ijtihad* suggested any hostility either to change or, for that matter, to popularly induced change.<sup>32</sup> Rather it tends to point to Azad's lasting conviction that change was a primarily moral, rather than a legal undertaking. The application of juristic principles in matters relating to the state, law or economic production, he believed, must be preceded by changes in moral conduct leading to righteous action and submission to God. Indeed, there is in much of what Azad wrote a strong sense that juristic matters were not only peripheral to the ultimate objectives of a religious tradition, but that they actually concealed its higher, more authentic, moral concerns.

To say that Azad cared less about the legal rather than the moral components of change is not to suggest that he cared not at all for legal initiatives or that he discounted their relevance. Nor is his apparent lack of concern for the dynamic quality of *ijtihad* to be construed as suggestive of a more 'conservative' temperament. For what Azad and Iqbal shared was precisely a common appreciation of the creative possibilities inherent in the exercise of *ijtihad*. What separated them was the question of who, ultimately, was empowered to exercise *ijtihad* on behalf of the community.

There is everything to suggest that Azad himself had no doubt at all that *ijtihad* ought to be the preserve of the *ulama*, or at least of one among them in the form of the *mujtahid*.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the idea of the individual reformer or *mujtahid* reminiscent of an Ibn Taymiyya or a Shah Waliullah, assumed an important place in Azad's thinking at least until the early 1920s when his attempts to assume that role for himself were decisively rejected by the broad consensus of the Indian *ulama*. Azad's perception of the *ulama* as corrupt and in need of reform obliged him, however, to be far more circumspect about the question of *ijtihad*. For he was persuaded that so long as the *ulama* were subject to 'ignorance and *taqlid*',<sup>34</sup> *ijtihad* itself would have to remain suspended. Although he was prepared to accept that others like the Mughal emperor, Akbar, might, in exceptional circumstances, have to exercise *ijtihad* in the interests of clerical reform, Azad was clearly unwilling to regard it as in any sense a precedent.<sup>35</sup> There was certainly no question of its application in present times. For while Azad denounced the *ulama* for failing to execute their responsibilities, he was categorically opposed to the idea of extending the right of *ijtihad* to western-educated Muslims. Nothing was as intolerable to him as the prospect of 'purveyors of . . . enlightened thought and modern research' attempt-

ing to dress[ed] up atheism and free thought in the disguise of wisdom and *ijtihad*'.<sup>36</sup>

Yet, whatever his reservations about its relevance in a climate of moral turpitude, it is doubtful whether Azad ever wholly abandoned his concern to revive *ijtihad* as a creative instrument in the service of *khairat* (righteous action). Certainly his solitary, not to say, lonely quest to base the notion of *umma al-wahidah* on the authority of the Quran symbolized something of his confidence in the power of individual judgement to reawaken men to the fundamental injunctions of their faith.

Iqbal shared many of Azad's ideas about a reprobate clergy ridden by prejudice and superstition.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it is almost certain that this is what prompted him to outline an essentially lay vision where the impetus for change would stem from within the community as a whole. Iqbal's concern to encourage Muslims to absorb 'the new forces that are set free in the world of Islam' led him to conclude not only that the power of *ijtihad* be exercised collectively by a body of persons, or an elected Assembly so as to ensue in some kind of representative consensus or *ijma*, but that its organization along these lines was perfectly sound.<sup>38</sup>

However, Iqbal was far from advocating a political community that endorsed the complete dissociation of the *ulama* from the legislative process. Two reasons account for his 'moderating conservatism'<sup>39</sup> on the issue of *ulama* participation. First, his susceptibility to nostalgic yearnings<sup>40</sup> engendered a profound mistrust of liberalism and encouraged an appreciation of 'the value and function of the forces of conservatism'.<sup>41</sup> Second, his fear that 'erroneous interpretations' in 'Mohammedan Law' would result from the dismal state of Islamic learning among western-educated Muslims.<sup>42</sup> Both led Iqbal to press for a more collaborative role for the *ulama*. Their established reputation as guardians of the past would, he believed, act to restrain the 'youthful fervour' of liberal reform.<sup>43</sup> Their expertise in Islamic Law would be an indispensable asset in 'helping and guiding free discussion' in Muslim assemblies dominated by the western-educated classes.<sup>44</sup>

What would seem to emerge from the discussion above is that common perceptions of Azad and Iqbal as advocates respectively of 'conservatism' and 'dynamism' need to be revised. Their thinking on *ijtihad* reveals important lines of convergence especially in regard to the liberating role of *ijtihad* and to the participation of the *ulama* as integral parts of the political community. There were of course differences, but these had less to do with the 'static' and 'dynamic' qualities of each man's thinking than with the significance each attached to morality and law as motors of political evolution and change.



There is in Azad's understanding of *ijtihad* a much greater emphasis on its capacity to act as an ethical force in the service of reform. Unlike Iqbal who clearly envisaged *ijtihad* as a legal initiative backed in some sense by the state and mandate of elected Muslim representatives, Azad assumed that its ultimate sanction would lie with a class of reformed *ulama* who, by dint of moral pressure, would prevail upon Muslims to tread the path of righteous action. In their search for sanctions that would render *ijtihad* both effective and meaningful, Azad turned to men of religion, while Iqbal turned to the state. This is perhaps what accounts, in part, for the tendency to associate Azad with 'traditionalism' and Iqbal with 'modernity'. Yet, it is clear that these descriptions do nothing to further our understanding of how a 'traditionalist' like Azad came to espouse a political vision that was at once so bold and humane, or indeed, of how so daring and 'modern' an intellectual as Iqbal should have 'served to weaken liberalism among Indian Muslims'.<sup>65</sup>

The answers to these questions lie not so much in pursuing elements of 'traditionalism' and 'modernism', but in paying closer attention to the assumptions that Azad and Iqbal each brought to bear on his understanding of law and morality as instruments of communal change. Azad's indifference to legal issues was rooted in the assumption that a pre-occupation with the law was symptomatic of a Judaic consciousness. Its spirit of legality and its excessive regard for the specificities of religious conduct and ritual, he believed, led men away from the universal message and moral purpose that underlay religion. The causes of Muslim decline in India and elsewhere, he argued, could be traced directly to a concern with the juristic aspects of Islam. Azad's vision of a political community based on universal moral principles rather than on a code of law was a reflection of his concern to persuade men of the lasting significance of *deen* over *Shariat*.

Like Azad, Iqbal was equally cognisant of the extreme 'spirit of legality manifested by Judaism'.<sup>66</sup> Unlike Azad, however, Iqbal assumed that a concern with questions of universal morality tended often to be suggestive of the kind of other-worldliness characteristic of later Sufism. . . (sic) which obscured men's vision of. . . Islam as a social polity'.<sup>67</sup> For Iqbal it was not excessive legalism, but a debilitating spiritualism that had vitiated the cultural and political superiority of Islam. He believed that a bold recourse to the Law constituted the single most effective antidote to regressive other-worldliness. Its most tangible and desirable consequence would be to restore his community's 'specific inwardness'.<sup>68</sup> Unlike Azad who envisaged a community which militated

against 'revivalism in social matters' on the grounds that it amounted to a 'denial of progress',<sup>69</sup> Iqbal sought actively to re-create a community where 'even the immutability of socially harmless rules relating to eating and drinking, purity and impurity, has a life-value of its own'.<sup>70</sup>

To offer so simple, some might argue simplistic, an assessment of Azad and Iqbal's understanding of the reviving role of law and morality in the creation of a better political community is, however, to obscure the enormous complexity of each man's thinking. For while Azad was deeply concerned to integrate the principles of universal morality in his quest for a better political community, he was also wary of the dangers of Sufi metaphysical doctrines that could dilute the activist component of his moral programme.<sup>71</sup> Here he was firmly in the tradition of Ibn Taymiyya although, as Douglas points out, he went further than Taymiyya in his openness to, and tolerance of, other religions.<sup>72</sup> Nor was Iqbal prepared to endorse a political community that was lacking in spirituality. Indeed, what he was determined to avoid was the spiritual barrenness that had become part of the European political landscape. His vision of a political community was of a 'spiritual democracy' where social life would be reconstructed in the light of 'ultimate principles'.<sup>73</sup>

It remains to sum up some of the tentative conclusions of this paper. Of these the most general might be to urge a reappraisal of Azad and Iqbal as protagonists of a common religious heritage. It suggests that what each man represented was not so much a 'true' or 'false' vision of an Islamic tradition, but its tensions and, some might say, its inherent contradictions.

Their understanding of the scope of the political community as both universal and exclusive was shaped partly by their encounter with societies beyond the shores of India, but partly also by drawing on two different, though equally authentic strands, within a single tradition. There was conflict, but there was also convergence. Azad's idea of a universalist political community grounded in religious pluralism had seemingly little in common with Iqbal's preference for a more exclusive, internally cohesive, society. Yet, what is notable is the degree to which each incorporated essential elements of the other's vision. For Azad the quest for a universalist political order was intimately tied to the question of how such an order might enable Muslims, in particular, to better secure the life of righteous action enjoined by the Quran. His was no version of latter-day pantheism, but rather a stoic refusal to accept that righteousness and being Muslim depended upon the creation of a recognisably Islamic State.

In a sense Iqbal would readily have endorsed this premise. For what lay at the heart of his political community was a profound sense that it existed as part of a wider spiritual fraternity whose essence lay beyond place and time. Whilst therefore the implementation of the *shariat* remained an essential condition of his political vision, his ultimate concern, and he believed that of the Islamic tradition, was with the human community as a whole. His was an expansive, though not he maintained, an expansionist community.<sup>74</sup> Its exclusiveness was not, and indeed could not be, an end in itself if it was to fulfil the universal aspirations of its spiritual ethos.

This sense of the spiritual dimensions in Islam was a trait common to both Azad and Iqbal. Yet neither allowed it to obscure or deflect their concern with the needs of a historically evolving community. Both recognised the crucial importance of *ijtihad* as an instrument of change; neither was prepared to endorse a community that excluded participation by the *ulama*.

## NOTES

1 Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 186.

2 Azad and Iqbal may have had occasion to encounter one another through their common membership of the Lahore-based Anjuman-e Himayat-e Islam. Iqbal made his national debut as a poet at the annual session of the Anjuman in 1900. Shortly afterwards in 1904, the young Azad, then editor of the journal *Lisan al-Sidq* was invited to deliver the society's annual address. See Hafeez Malik and Lynda Malik, 'Life of the Poet-Philosopher' in Hafeez Malik (ed.), *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 16; Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941), p.30; and Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* (eds.), Gail Minault and Christian Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.59.

3 M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 452.

4 S.A. Vahid, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1964), p.162.

5 See among others, Hafeez Malik, *Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1963); S.M. Ikram, *Modern Muslim India and the Birth of Pakistan* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1970); pp. 134-148, 160-181 and Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, pp. 156-164, 186-189.

6 Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, p. 185.

7 Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 458.

- 8 Ikram, *Modern Muslim India*, pp. 140, 175-176, 179.
- 9 Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (complete version. Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), p. 2. See also Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 38.
- 10 Malik and Malik, 'Life of the Poet-Philosopher', pp. 5, 17.
- 11 See the extended discussion by Douglas and his editors in Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 79-83, and Azad's own version in Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 7-8.
- 12 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 84-86.
- 13 'I was more convinced than ever', wrote Azad, 'that Indian Muslims must co-operate in the work of political liberation of the country'. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 7.
- 14 A.H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 118-119.
- 15 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979), p. 220.
- 16 Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p.151.
- 17 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 107-109.
- 18 Malik, *Moslem Nationalism*, p. 270; Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, p. 188; and Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 141-147.
- 19 Kenneth Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the Quran* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1985), p. 29.
- 20 *Al Hilal*, 1, (8): 2-3, quoted in Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 144.
- 21 Azad himself believed that his commitment to a pluralistic community had remained consistent. In 1940, in his address to Congress he declared: 'I would remind my co-religionists that today I stand exactly where I stood in 1912'. Quoted in *ibid.*, p.141.
- 22 Quoted in Ikram, *Modern Muslim India*, p. 165. A fine translation that was not immediately available to me is that of A.J. Arberry, *Complaint and Answer* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1955).
- 23 Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 485.
- 24 From 'Sicily' in V.G. Kiernan, *Poems from Iqbal* (London: John Murray, 1955), pp. 13, 14.
- 25 The spirit of *Naya Shiwa* (A New Altar) is captured in the following verse:

Come, let us lift suspicions' thick curtains once again  
 Unite once more the sundered, wipe clean division's stain.  
 Too long has lain deserted the heart's warm habitation -  
 Come, build here in our homeland an altar's new foundation . . .

Kiernan, *Poems from Iqbal*, pp. 8-9.

- 26 Abu Sayeed, Nur-ud-Din, *Islami Tasawwuf aur Iqbal* (Karachi: Iqbal Academy, 1959).
- 27 'Azad's pan-Islamism', wrote Douglas, '... was not something that gave way later to Indian nationalism. From the very beginning it served the interests of his nationalism.' Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p.149. For another similar,

though somewhat differently expressed view, see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

28 Vahid, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, p. 376.

29 'Nationality with us', he wrote, 'is a pure idea, it has no geographical basis. But inasmuch as the average man demands a material centre of nationality, the Muslim looks for it in the holy town of Mecca, so that the basis of Muslim nationality combines the real and the ideal, the concrete and the abstract'. Ibid., p. 51.

30 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad* (editors' conclusion), pp. 287-288. See also Christian Troll, 'Abul Kalam Azad's Sarmad the Martyr' in Christopher Shackle, (ed.), *Urdu and Muslim South Asia: Studies in Honour of Ralph Russell*, (London: SOAS, 1989), pp. 113-128.

31 Quoted in Hafeez Malik, 'Man of Thought and Action' in Malik, *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher*, p. 75.

32 Quoted in Ibid., p. 76.

33 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 166-167; see also Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, pp. 459-460.

34 Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 490.

35 Abul Kalam Azad, *The Tarjuman al-Quran*, vol. I, translated by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif (London: Asia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 170-183; 193-194.

36 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 211.

37 Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom and True Muslims. The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India, 1912-1947* (Lund: Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1971), pp. 31-36. See also, Yohannan Friedmann, 'The Attitude of the Jamiyyat-i-Ulama-i-Islam to the Indian National Movement and the Establishment of Pakistan' in Gabriel Baer (ed.), *The Ulama in Modern History* (Jerusalem, Asian and African Studies, Israeli Oriental Society, VII, 1971), pp. 157-183.

38 Iqbal to R.A. Nicholson, 24 January 1921 in B.A. Dar (ed.), *Letters of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1978), p. 144.

39 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, pp. 140, 147.

40 Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith*, p. 28.

41 Iqbal to R.A. Nicholson, 24 January 1921, in Dar (ed.), *Letters*, p. 144.

42 Quoted in Muhammad Daud Rahbar, 'Glimpses of the Man' in Malik (ed.), *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher*, p. 53.

43 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 140.

44 Sheila McDonough, *The Authority of the Past: A Study of Three Muslim Modernists* (Chambersburg: Penn., American Academy of Religion, 1970), pp. 32-34.

45 Vahid, *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, p. 162.

46 Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, p. 175.

47 *Al-Hilal*, no. 21, vol. II, 29 May, 1913, quoted in Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims*, p. 458.

48 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 76.

- 49 Azad, *The Tarjuman al-Quran*, p. xxxviii.
- 50 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 144.
- 51 Ibid., p. 165.
- 52 Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, p. 175. See also the discussion on Azad's preference for democratic government in Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, pp. 132-133, 137.
- 53 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 133.
- 54 Quoted in Ibid., p. 165.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Quoted in Ibid.
- 57 Some of these views he chose to express poetically:

God's people have no portion in that country  
Where lordly tassel sprouts from monkish cap;  
That cap bred passionate faith, this tassel breeds  
Passion for playing pander to Government

From 'To the Punjab Pirs' in Kiernan, *Poems from Iqbal*, p. 58. See also Barbara Metcalf, 'Iqbal: Ideology in Search of an Audience', in C.M. Naim (ed.), *Iqbal, Jinnah and Pakistan* (Delhi: Jinnah Publishing House, 1982), pp. 132-144.

- 58 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 149.
- 59 Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, p. 155.
- 60 Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 457.
- 61 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 158.
- 62 Ibid., p. 166.
- 63 Ibid., p. 155.
- 64 Ibid., p. 167.
- 65 W.C. Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 54 and p. 63 fn. Others like Fazlur Rahman have also noted how the teaching of the sub-continent's foremost Muslim modernist 'has thrown its overwhelming weight on the revivalist side'. Rahman, *Islam*, p. 255. See also Ikram, *Modern Muslim India*, p. 175.
- 66 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 157.
- 67 Ibid., p. 143.
- 68 Ibid., p. 159.
- 69 Ikram, *Modern Muslim India*, p. 145.
- 70 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 159.
- 71 Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 259.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 170.
- 74 He wrote: 'The Muslim people have fought and conquered like other people . . . I do not deny; but I am absolutely sure that territorial conquest was no part of the original programme of Islam'. Iqbal to R.A. Nicholson, 24 January 1921, in Dar (ed.), *Letters of Iqbal*, p. 146.

# **Secular and Communitarian Representations of Indian Nationalism: Ideology and Praxis of Azad and Mohamed Ali**

**Musbirul Hasan**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's ideological discourse was influenced by his knowledge of and interaction with Islamic societies, while his political praxis was determined by the specificity of India's colonial experience. At the same time, he was not swayed by a unified stream of thought or a monolithic ideology. Though Islam was central to his world view, he took great pains to scrutinise and evaluate existing theories and established notions. 'There is no conviction in my heart', he wrote, 'which the thorns of doubt have failed to pierce: there is no faith in my soul which has not been subjected to all the conspiracy of disbelief'.<sup>1</sup> Allegiance to his intellectual mentors was not constant as the Maulana traversed the rough terrain of religion, politics and philosophy. 'I am under no obligation', he claimed, 'for guidance to any man's hand or tongue, nor to any syllabus of education. All the guidance I have received has been from the Divine Throne'.<sup>2</sup> In the end, he emerged from the darkness of his inner strivings as a very independent man.

The same spirit of independence was the hallmark of his public life. He was nobody's follower, not even Gandhi's. Even though religion and moral fervour bound the Mahatma and the Maulana in a common quest for swaraj, they did not share a common perspective on and outlook towards socio-political issues. Azad's relationship with other

front-rank Congress leaders was ambivalent. This was because his political survival was not dependent on his loyalty to a Gandhi or a Jawaharlal Nehru or his alignment with or opposition to any of the Congress factions. His stature and charismatic appeal rested on his quality of mind, his unassailable loyalty to the Congress, his deep commitment to India's independence and his firm opposition to communal forces. In the words of Mohammad Mujeeb:

He was too aloof to concern himself with persons, too intellectual to relish political small talk, too proud to think in terms of alliance, affiliation or opposition. . . . He had to be taken for what he was, with no credentials other than his personality.<sup>3</sup>

This paper reflects on Azad's relationship with Mohamed Ali, a leading and popular figure who rose like a firmament on the Indian political scene.<sup>4</sup> Both burst on the national scene around the same time, achieving success and prominence through their powerful writings. They voiced their community's anguish over the Balkan issue, the Kanpur mosque, the future of the university at Aligarh, and spearheaded the massive pan-Islamic upsurge. While Azad worked laboriously over sheafs of *fatawa*,<sup>5</sup> Mohamed Ali reached out to the common people to disseminate his ideas on a wide range of contemporary issues relating to Indian nationalism, the future of Islam and of Indian Muslims. And when the British government put them in gaol time and time again, both of them reflected on their role with a sense of pride and satisfaction, deriving comfort from the fact of occupying centre-stage and influencing the course of history.<sup>6</sup> Azad saw himself in the same role as Jesus, a victim of unjust courts:

At all events, how strange and glorious a place is this prisoners' deck where both the greatest and the best of men are made to stand. For even so great a being as He, this was no inappropriate place.<sup>7</sup>

Mohamed Ali wrote from Chhindwara: 'Such sufferings and privations as ours have only too often been the lot of mankind in all ages and climes'.<sup>8</sup> The trial, he said at Karachi on 26 October 1922, was not 'Mohamed Ali and six others *versus* the Crown', but 'God *versus* man'. And the question was: 'Should God dominate over man or shall man dominate over God?'<sup>9</sup>



Comparing Azad and Mohamed Ali reveals their ideological orientation, their responses to Indian nationalism and their changing perceptions of the communal issue. Above all, it helps to unfold aspects of the post-Khilafat phase, when the Hindu-Muslim front, of which Azad and Mohamed Ali were the architects, was steadily undermined.

## I

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the rise of a new generation of young Muslims—the men of 'Nai Raushni'—with an ideology and outlook on contemporary social and political issues which was different from Aligarh's first generation. Men like Hasrat Mohani, Zafar Ali Khan, Raja Ghulam Husain, the Ali brothers and Wilayat Ali 'Bambooque' repudiated Aligarh's political legacy by acting in unison with nationalist forces. All of them belonged to the United Provinces.<sup>10</sup> All were graduates of the Aligarh College, where they had once learnt the lessons of loyalty at the feet of their mentor, Syed Ahmad Khan.

The person who did not belong to UP and was not educated in western schools and colleges was Mohiuddin Ahmad, better known as Abul Kalam Azad. He studied at Mecca and, in 1898, when the family returned to India, he was tutored by his father Maulana Khairuddin Ahmad in the Islamic sciences. Later, he came into contact with Shibli Nomani, founder of the famous Nadwat al-ulama, and was exposed to the liberal, reformist writings of Egyptian scholars—Mohammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. With his enriched intellectual experiences, he, more than anybody else, was able to comment on contemporary issues with sensitivity in his first major journalistic venture, the *Al-Hilal*, launched in 1912, which took educated Muslims by storm with its eloquence and fervour. 'The Muslims were set on fire by his passionate words', recalled Sulaiman Nadwi, who worked with him on the staff of *Al-Hilal* for a time in 1913.<sup>11</sup>

Azad strayed into the political arena in Calcutta, then in the throes of the swadeshi agitation. Impressed by the revolutionaries,<sup>12</sup> he regarded their anti-imperialism parallel to similar movements in other Muslim lands: he claimed that the *Al-Hilal* was founded to propagate his nationalistic, anti-imperialistic stand. From 1912-13 until his imprisonment in 1921, he was connected with several agitations for which he was often sent to gaol. He toiled in and out of prison over a monumental *Tarjuman al-Quran*, the first volume of which was published

in 1931, and put forward the view of the transcendental oneness of all faiths and the theology of multi-religious co-operation. He was looked upon, in spite of his youthful years, as one of the elders of the Congress, whose advice both in national and political matters as well as in regard to the communal and minority questions, was highly valued. In the final phase of his life, he returned to the front rank of politics as the Congress President from 1939 to 1946, and as the symbol of those Muslims who worked for a united India. He opposed partition heart and soul—almost alone among the Congress stalwarts to do so. His speeches echoed the themes of his earlier life and writings: communal harmony, religious broad-mindedness and cultural cosmopolitanism.

Mohamed Ali's career followed a familiar graph—degrees obtained at Aligarh and Oxford, followed by jobs in the Princely States of Rampur and Baroda. While in service, he wrote and lectured on the contemporary political scene and took part in the foundation of the All-India Muslim League. By the time the *Comrade* was launched on 14 January 1911, Mohamed Ali (yet to acquire the prefix 'Maulana' before his name) had won many hearts and gained a substantial following in his alumni, the MAO College at Aligarh. Around this time, Azad was busy planning his journalistic assault in Calcutta, where the echoes of the swadeshi movement continued to reverberate in many circles.

When the *Comrade* and *Al-Hilal* appeared, they bore the unmistakable style of their editors. Azad was a consummate stylist. He wrote authoritatively. His discourse was subtle, complex and incisive; his style was fierce and combative and akin to the Egyptian journal *al-Urwa al wuthqa*. He marshalled scriptural and rational arguments assaulting the positions of his opponents effectively, pausing only to regret occasionally the necessity of dealing with noisome adversaries. He spoke in the language of a 'high-souled prophet', appealed to his community's religious passions, awakened their dormant spirits by the use of Islamic symbols and urged the *ulama* to alter the language and tenor of their discourse. He envisaged leading the Muslims at the head of a 'Party of God' (*Hizbullah*) which would unite all Indians in ousting the British and founded the Dar al-Irshad to reform the teaching methods used in religious institutions, to encourage independent thinking and to make plain to students the social applicability of their curriculum. Such activities were a necessary preliminary to Azad's emergence as a powerful political force. They were also intended to change the intellectual and political climate created by the Aligarh

school.

Mohamed Ali had an equally meteoric rise, though he was neither an ideologue nor a theorist like Azad. He was a crusader—one who sought to undo the 'wrongs' done to his community by the forces inimical to Islam. That is why he took to journalism, 'the only avenue through which I could reach a place in which I could prove of any appreciable use to it. . .'. His style was verbose, pedestrian, rambling and repetitive; yet, he had a profound influence in moulding public opinion. 'No paper has so much influence with the students as the *Comrade*, and no individual has the authority over them which is exercised by Mohamed Ali', reported the UP government.<sup>13</sup> When Mohamed Ali wanted to stop the *Hamdard* at the beginning of his internment, he was implored not to do so. 'I don't approve of your decision and I don't think many will', observed Wilayat Ali 'Bombooque. 'You can't imagine what the loss of *Hamdard* will mean to us the Mussalmans'.<sup>14</sup> Wilayat Ali was not the only one to recognise how the *Comrade* and *Hamdard* had contributed to a general awakening of educated Muslims. The Muslim intelligentsia throughout the country responded with warmth and enthusiasm to Mohamed Ali's writings.

Islam, as expressed in Mohamed Ali's life, was different from Islam as expressed in Azad's life. But in both cases it was a vital component of their identity and the chief source of intellectual inspiration. Mohamed Ali's early religious training involved a superficial acquaintance with the rudiments of Islam and the concomitant ritual. The family influences, too, do not appear to have been such as to have either inclined him in favour of dogmatic theology, or fostered in him independence of thought and a spirit of rebellion against the prevailing religious beliefs. His mother's gentle influence, to which Mohamed Ali owed so much in life, was exerted more in the direction of promoting his educational career than in creating around him a religious atmosphere.

Mohamed Ali lamented that he did not have the benefit of acquiring the traditional Muslim education: 'it is not without a feeling of deep shame that I have to confess, we boys and girls born and bred in Muslim households were taught far less of our religion than most English boys and girls of our age and position'.<sup>15</sup> Aligarh 'furnished' students with 'little equipment in the matter of knowledge of faith'.<sup>16</sup> Though Mohamed Ali attended Shibli's lectures on the Quran, referring to the 'exquisite elation of sitting in the Principal's Hall attending (his) lectures on the Quran with all the dignity of a Quasi 'Undergrad',<sup>17</sup> the Quran still 'practically remained a closed book to us, and the traditions of the

Prophet was no more than a name'.<sup>18</sup>

Mohamed Ali recalled in *My Life*, the only source which illuminates his inner self-awareness of Islam, how he was intoxicated with the force and grandeur of the Quran he read in Maulvi Nazir Ahmad's Urdu translation. After years of ignorance of his Islamic heritage, he discovered the Quran as a 'perennial of truth', a 'complete scheme of life', a 'perfect code of conduct'.<sup>19</sup> *Tawhid* grew upon him as a personal reality, man in the dignity of his 'service' as Viceregent of God, and himself as part of this great strength. 'This was my unique discovery in that small volume revealed some thirteen centuries ago to an Arab of the desert whose name I bore'.<sup>20</sup>

The enforced leisure at Chhindwara, Lansdowne and Betul jails enabled Mohamed Ali to steep himself afresh in his Islamic heritage and turn to the study of his religion—charting out an unfamiliar subject, getting at its rudiments and exploring its nuances. He read the *Sihah-e-Sittah*, a compilation of the traditions (*Hadith*) of the Prophet Mohammad, and the works of Imam Ghazali, Jalaluddin Rumi and Mohammad Iqbal. The reading of *Asrar-e-Khudi* (Secrets of Self) was an enthralling experience. 'I experienced an exquisite thrill of delight', he wrote, 'when I found the Poet and Philosopher was, in his own inimitable fashion, giving expression to the same basic truth of Islam, which I had in a blundering sort of way discovered for myself'.<sup>21</sup> And turning to Islamic history, Mohamed Ali saw its great men as figures to whom he could talk and its crises as guides to action in current affairs.<sup>22</sup> Studying Islam was not uncommon; in fact, people like Syed Ahmad Khan, Shibli Nomani and Azad had done so with greater scholarship, but none with a greater personal need. 'Since I first commenced the study of the Quran; he wrote to Abdul Majid Daryabadi, 'I have read a fair amount about Islam from the point of view of Muslims and also of their critics; but nothing I have read has altered the significance of Islam for me to which I had stumbled in the first few months of our internment eight years ago'.<sup>23</sup> Mohamed Ali wrote to Gandhi:

Whatever else my internment may or may not have done, it has I believe set the soul free. . . What I could dimly perceive before I now realise with distinctness, and it is this, that the whole aim and end of life is to serve God and obey His commandments. . . I confess I had never before grasped this truth in all its fullness. . . Internment made us seek refuge in the Holy

Quran, and for the first time, I have to confess it, I read it through and with new eyes. It was then that this truth dawned upon me and gave me coherence and unity to a thousand vague aspirations to do good to my people, my country and men and women in general.<sup>26</sup>

The experience was, in some ways, similar to that of Azad. His three-and-a-half year internment in Ranchi kindled his Islam into warmth and fervour. He began writing the *Tarjuman al-Quran*, with his commentary on the opening *Surah Fatihah*, and its themes—Divine Providence, benevolence, justice, unity and guidance, *rahubiyah*, *rahma*, *adala*, *tawhid* and *hidaya*.

Azad and Mohamed Ali were one in asserting the transcendental truth of Islam, which offered 'a way of life, a moral code and social polity',<sup>27</sup> a complete set of rules (*qanun-e falah*), as Azad put it. They were convinced of the rightness of the Islamic ideals—a complete way of life for an organised community living out Allah's plan under the kind of government which had prevailed in the days of the Prophet. They were equally convinced that the Islamic principles were perfectly compatible with reason or science. This was Mohamed Ali's central argument in 'The Future of Islam' and of Azad's essays, published in the first three issues of *Al-Hilal*. Alone among his contemporaries in religious institutions, Azad conceived for Islam a vital socio-political role that went against the apparently triumphant secularizing tendencies of the age and conveyed first to his associates and pupils and then to Indian society at large the vibrant and comprehensive vision of Islam that had first begun to animate his being in youth. In April 1913, Azad wrote in *Al-Hilal*:

Islam does not commend narrow-mindedness and racial and religious prejudice. It does not make the recognition of merit and virtue, of human benevolence, mercy and love dependent upon and subject to distinctions of religion and race. It teaches us to respect every man who is good, whatever be his religion, to let ourselves be drawn towards merits and virtues, whatever the religion or the race of the person who possesses them. . . . But above and beyond this law of universal goodwill, and I do not hesitate to own it even in this age of hypothetical impartiality, is the *jihad* of helping the cause of justice, worshipping Allah and establishing right-mindedness and justice. Islam teaches us

that the purpose of the creation of man is that he should represent God on earth, keep burning the torch of truth and light.<sup>26</sup>

Azad's rationalism was not merely an element in his modernist, intellectual explorations, but also an integral part of his traditional scholastic training. Mohamed Ali was a vigorous proponent of neo-intellectual modernism, deriving his ideas from Syed Ahmad in his appeal for cultivating scientific disciplines and rejecting *taqlid*. 'I have as much right to interpret God's message as any other man', he declared. Formal renunciation of a 'mildewed scholasticism' will set Islam 'right with the progressive world of science' and 'right with itself'.<sup>27</sup>

Azad echoed similar views in his inimitable scholarly manner. 'The shopkeepers of religion have given the name of religion to ignorance and *taqlid*, to prejudice and indulgence', he wrote in *Al-Hilal*. Years later, he commented:

The greatest hindrance to human intellectual progress is unquestioning acceptance of traditional beliefs. . . the first thorn of doubt which pricked my heart was against this very *taqlid*. . . . If the foundation of belief should be knowledge, why on *taqlid* and inheritance.<sup>28</sup>

The rationalist strain enabled Azad and Mohamed Ali to reconcile their passionate attachment to pan-Islamism with the ideological underpinnings of Indian nationalism. They were of the view that pan-Islamism and nationalism were compatible ideologies; so they sought to establish that their community's anguish over Turkey's future deepened their involvement in the anti-colonial struggle and brought them closer to the Congress. Azad, more than Mohamed Ali, was able to draw upon the Quran and the *Hadith* to advocate Hindu-Muslim amity and to strengthen the case for non-co-operation against the British. Following closely the views of Abduh who, in answer to inquiries from India, had endorsed inter-religious co-operation, Azad reiterated, with all the religious fervour he could command, that Muslims should be up in front, fighting for freedom.<sup>29</sup> Mohamed Ali offered the same advice: Muslims must fight for Swaraj with their non-Muslim brethren, for only in this way would it be possible to achieve the Khilafat aim. 'If you want to release the Khilafat from slavery', he stated, 'there is only one course for you and that is that you should side with the Hindus and first secure the freedom of your own country.

You cannot save Islam from danger so long as you do not rule your own country'.<sup>30</sup> This conviction was shared by many Muslims who were able to easily swing back and forth between pan-Islamic and local nationalist appeals, depending upon which was a more appropriate anti-imperialist weapon.

Mohamed Ali's first editorial was a plea for Hindu-Muslim friendship. It was his firm belief that, 'if the Muslims or the Hindus attempt to achieve success in opposition to or even without the co-operation of one another, they will not only fail, but fail ignominiously'.<sup>31</sup> And the *Comrade* was intended to prepare Muslims to 'contribute to territorial patriotism without abating a jot of the fervour of their extra-territorial sympathies which is the quintessence of Islam'.<sup>32</sup> His misgivings about the Congress were removed in Chhindwara when he had the leisure to reflect on the role of Tilak<sup>33</sup> and came into contact with Gandhi, whom he had first met at Aligarh in 1915.<sup>34</sup> Soon thereafter, he came under the Mahatma's spell. He wrote to Saifuddin Kitchlew:

It is Gandhi, Gandhi, Gandhi, that has got to be dinned into the people's ear, because he means Hindu-Muslim unity, non-co-operation, *swadharma* and *swaraja*, while the rest are after petty communal or local bodies, most of them tinged with personal ambitions.<sup>35</sup>

Mohamed Ali's emotional disposition in religious matters had surely much to do with the nature and with the promptness of his response to events in Turkey. In this context there is no reason at all to doubt the sincerity of his indignation, aroused by the machinations of some European Powers, and his genuinely-felt emotional concern for the safety of the Holy Places. The opinion, presented by Francis Robinson and others, that it was all feigned, that he was simply playing the pan-Islamist, cannot be seriously defended. Calculation comes in, not in pretending an emotion which is not there, but in deciding how much of a genuinely-felt emotion to release publicly; how far to let oneself go.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, it is difficult to sustain the charge, rendered plausible by Mohamed Ali's complicated financial situation, that he lived off the Khilafat Funds. Such an allegation was inspired by Mohamed Ali's detractors, especially amongst government officials, the landlords, and a section of the *ulama*.

Mohamed Ali's pan-Islamism was both instinctive and the outcome

of much thought and deliberation. Central to his belief was the view, based on the concept of *umma*, that 'the basis of Islamic sympathy is not a common domicile or common parentage, but a common outlook on life and common culture', and that 'the embodiment of that culture is the Khilafat'. Inspired by Azad's description of a 'political centre' (*siyasi markaz*), Mohamed Ali argued that the 'personal centre' of Islam was the Khalifa and the 'local centre' was the 'Island of Arabia', the *Jazirat al-Arab*.

It was not ceremonial piety that motivated Mohamed Ali and other Khilafatists to rally under the Khilafat banner. The Khalifa, according to the classical theorists, was the Defender of the Faith and wielded authority to ensure that Muslims follow the *shariat*. For this reason, the Khilafat was 'the most essential institution of the Muslim community'; hence its defence was a sacred duty.<sup>37</sup> Mohamed Ali gave the need for preserving in the institution a utilitarian quality when he told a London audience:

Well, so long as there are your Bryces and your "Big sticks", we, too, must have some sort of stick for the defence of our faith, and to jeopardise at least the dominance of those that jeopardise the freedom of our conscience. That, and that alone is the *rationale* of our main claim that the Khilafat should be preserved with adequate temporal power.<sup>38</sup>

He also took great pains to explain that Muslims were not concerned with political dominance because the 'spiritual force of Islam' did not depend on political supremacy. What concerned them most was the weakening of the temporal power of Islam to the extent that it might become 'liable to suffer, without adequate power to prevent, the curtailment of its spiritual influence through the pressures of the temporal power of rival creeds'.<sup>39</sup>

The defence of the Khalifa and the Holy Places was seen as the method of assuring that the *Ummat-e-Islamia* be given the freedom to conform to its religious precepts. The Khilafatists envisioned a renaissance Islamic world, in which all Muslim peoples were united in a strong Islamic world—'the supernatural sangathan of Muslims in five continents'<sup>40</sup>—built around the Khalifa and supporting each other through that institution whenever there was a threat to the security of any Muslim. The new Khalifa, judged from the views expressed by Mohamed Ali at the Mecca Conference in 1928, would be based on





Maulana Abul Kalam Azad





**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُوْلُهُ الْاِسْلَامُ اَكْبَرُ مَنِدِي

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# الهلال

أبوابه مفتوحة للجميع

محرر: ميرزا قليچ بيگ

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محرر: ميرزا قليچ بيگ  
محرر: ميرزا قليچ بيگ

عدد: ١٢٢  
تاريخ: ١٢٢٢

عدد: ١٢٢

العدد ١٢٢، جلد ٥ - ربيع الأول ١٣٣٢ هجري  
Calcutta, Wednesday, July, 29 1914.

عدد: ١٢٢

رَبَّنَا لَا جُنْدَ لَنَا فِتْنَةً الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ وَجَنَّا  
وَرَجَعْنَاكَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝ (٨٧ ١٢)  
رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ فَرْعَوْنُ وَمَلَأَ رَبُّنَا  
أَمْوَالَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ  
نَبِيِّكَ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَى أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ  
عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ  
الْأَلِيمَ ۝ (٨٨ ١٢)



Maulana Abul Kalam Azad





**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**





the pattern of *Khilafat-e-Rashida*. It would be a democratic institution, elective rather than dynastic, and the holder of the office would be chosen by virtue of his godliness, his devotion to Islam. All the Muslims of the world would have part in the direction of the government, all would be responsible for its welfare. This was a romantic vision. But Mohamed Ali was not one to recognise the dramatic changes in the 'Islamic world', the emergence of nationalism as a force and the rejection of pan-Islamic ideals in most countries, including Turkey. He continued to picture a new Muslim world—unified by common religious symbols and experiences—which would present a single force to whatever power attempted to jeopardise the rights of any Muslim.

## II

So long as Islam occupied centrality in the concerns of Azad and Mohamed Ali and religious symbols retained their primacy in mass mobilization campaigns, Azad and Mohamed Ali spoke from a common platform, acted in unison and voiced shared concerns. But once Gandhi called off civil disobedience and the Turks themselves burst the *Khilafat* bubble, they began to see the world around them differently.

It is, at first, hard to understand why this was so, for their differences were not so stark or fundamental as they are sometimes portrayed in historical accounts. Admittedly, their experiences in public life were not always the same, especially in the aftermath of the non-co-operation movement. Yet, they were both engaged in a common endeavour—the reordering of political priorities so as to define the position and status of their community in a free, composite and pluralist society. In addition, they continued to play a part in Congress affairs and were engaged in resolving the communal impasse, though sometimes from a different standpoint. Mohamed Ali's views were, for example, often at odds with the Congress, but his enthusiasm for that organisation was not dampened until the publication of the Nehru Committee Report in August 1928.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, he was so often engaged in verbal feuds with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru; yet, his loyalty to them never slackened. He and the younger Nehru were tied to each other by 'a bond of affection and mutual appreciation. . .'.<sup>42</sup> About the Mahatma, he announced in 1925 that he had identical views 'with regard to the way in which India can win her freedom'. 'I am proud to regard [him] as my chief', he declared.<sup>43</sup>

Azad shared the same sense of loyalty, though it was much less pronounced in his public utterances. In the post-*Khilafat* era, he was

inspired by Gandhi, Nehru and C.R. Das rather than by Afghani and Abduh. His writings and speeches echoed his life-long passion and yearning for India's political liberation, unity and inter-religious understanding. At Ramgarh, the Maulana said he was prepared to accept independence whenever available whether during War or peace; his sole object was attainment of real independence of Hindustan.

Why, then, the drift—the 'parting of ways'? Was it because Azad and Mohamed Ali were in competition for the leadership of their community? Was there a clash of personalities, a difference in temperament and style? Or, was the Azad-Ali divide symptomatic of the ideological polarization that followed the post-Khilafat and non-co-operation days? There are no simple answers, though perhaps the genesis of their rift can be traced to the abolition of the Khilafat and the collapse of the movement connected with it.

The demise of the time-honoured institution of Khilafat evoked quite a mixed reaction in India. In the eyes of some, this was a logical sequel to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the result of an anachronism maintained by force. Mohammad Iqbal, for example, believed that the Khilafat had long become 'a mere symbol of a power which departed long ago'. The idea of a universal Khilafat was workable when the empire of Islam was intact, but it had now become an obstacle in the way of the regeneration of independent Muslim states. He argued that the Turks had merely practised *ijtihad* by taking the view that the Khilafat could be vested sometimes in a body of persons, or an elected assembly. Iqbal found the Turkish view to be 'perfectly sound': the republican form of government was not only consistent with the spirit of Islam but had also become necessary in view of the new forces set free in the Islamic world.<sup>44</sup>

For the men of religion, the issue was more complex and could only be explained within the legal categories of orthodox Islam. Azad set out to do so: in Islam, he pointed out, spiritual leadership was the due of God and his Prophet alone. So obedience to the Khilafat was binding on all Muslims, though not in the same degree as submission to God and his Prophet. In his articles to the *Zamindar*, published in the spring of 1924, Azad opined that by abolishing the Khilafat of the Ottoman dynasty, the Turkish government had merely rectified the unsatisfactory division of spiritual and temporal powers which had existed since 1922. By down-playing the importance of Turkey's action, Azad tried to redirect the energies of the Khilafat Committees into work for education, social reform and the economic progress of India's Muslims.<sup>45</sup>

Mohamed Ali did not agree. He did not want to. The Khilafat cause was too dear to him to be abandoned without a fight. So what if the Turks allowed an age-old institution to disappear with utter calm and indifference? So what if the enthusiasm of his own colleagues had disappeared into thin air? So what if the Khilafat Committees were rocked by financial scandals and had long lost their *raison d'être*? With a strange quixotic tenacity, Mohamed Ali pursued an illusory goal, wasting many years of his life trying to make a hero of the Turkish Sultan—as perverse a task as was ever attempted. He tried to influence the Muslim League to negotiate with Ibn Saud and sought to assure his readers that the Khilafat Committees were striving to bring about a truly Islamic rule in the Holy Land, and that Indian Muslims, the largest single community in the Islamic world, should devote themselves whole-heartedly to the reformation of the Centres of Islam, and thus earn the good requital in both worlds. Not many were convinced. And not many responded to Mohamed Ali's call.<sup>46</sup>

The concerns of Azad were not the same. Though traumatised by the collapse of the Khilafat, there was no break in the essential continuity of his political ideology: he merely adapted himself well to the changed political climate. The shift, if any, was in Azad's framework of analysis. His perspective in the *Al-Hilal* years was largely moulded by the Quran, the *Hadith* and the traditions of Islam. Not so afterwards. He now learned how to 'eliminate irrelevant religious considerations when thinking of or discussing purely political issues',<sup>47</sup> and was increasingly attracted to composite, secular nationalism, championed by the Gandhi-Nehru dominated leadership of the Congress. His arguments, such as his defence of the Nehru Report, were no longer couched in theological terms, but were based on his understanding of the dynamics of and his commitment to a secular polity, a conviction that stayed with him even at the height of communal frenzy on the eve of independence and partition. 'It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest', he reaffirmed after independence, 'that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally different'. With an insight rare for those from his background, Azad argued: 'The real problems of the country were economic, not communal. The differences related to classes, not to communities'.<sup>48</sup>

Towards the end of 1928, Azad and Mohamed Ali found themselves in opposite camps—one canvassing for and the other fulminating against the Nehru Report. Mohamed Ali felt that its recommendations would jeopardise Muslim interests everywhere and lead to the ascendancy of

the Hindu Mahasabha. Azad did not share this dismal prophecy. Acting at the behest of Moulai Nehru, he worked laboriously, especially in Bengal, to garner support for the Nehru Report. He joined Dr M.A. Ansari, who was an equally enthusiastic supporter of the Nehru Report, in founding the All-India Nationalist Muslim Party in July 1929, and was one of the Congress presidents during the civil disobedience movement. While Mohamed Ali was nursing his diabetes in London, Azad was languishing in British jails.

The break over the Nehru Report proved irrevocable. Towards the end of 1929, Mohamed Ali aligned himself with the politically reactionary group of Muslims whom he had derided all his life. And in 1930, the year when his favourite philosopher-poet, Iqbal, was delineating the broad contours of a future Pakistan, Mohamed Ali chose the easy option of attending the Round Table Conference and keeping aloof from the people's struggle in the form of civil disobedience. The country, he argued, was not at all prepared to undertake such a movement: it lacked unity, discipline and self-control. Besides, he was doubtful whether Gandhi, with his dubious record of having suspended civil disobedience in 1922, would stick to his own programme.<sup>49</sup> He warned Jawaharlal that 'your present colleagues will desert you. They will leave you in the lurch in a crisis. Your own Congressmen will send you to the gallows'.<sup>50</sup>

Instead of civil disobedience, Mohamed Ali advised his countrymen to press their demand for freedom in London. But he soon realised the futility of his own advice, for neither the Indian delegates at the Round Table Conference could agree on a unified set of proposals nor was the British government inclined to concede the Congress demands. Perhaps, Mohamed Ali knew, much before he left the Indian shores for what turned out to be his final journey, that his mission was condemned as traitorous by those very people with whom he had worked in the past. And in London, the Maulana felt, according to Nehru's testimony, that 'his real place was in the fight in India, not in the futile conference chamber in London'.<sup>51</sup> In Oxford, where he had once studied Modern History at Lincoln College, he addressed the students in their tail coats, talked cricket and made them laugh. But he 'made little or no impression and quite failed to put across the case for the Muslims to a youthful but intelligent audience who were to provide a fair number of the nation's political leaders in later years'.<sup>52</sup>

### III

Azad plotted a course strewn with obstacles and difficulties of a seemingly insurmountable nature. It was one thing to seek refuge in pious and platitudinous statements but quite another thing to question and challenge, as the Maulana did, the ideological assault of the communalists. His Ramgarh speech—perhaps the most eloquent exposition of Indian nationalism ever made from a Congress platform—was a reaffirmation of his secular vision and a powerful rebuttal of the two-nation theory. It could well have served as a political manifesto for those Congress Muslims who were, after the death of Ansari in May 1936, in search of a leader and a programme to steer their ship through the rough currents of communalism.

In April 1940, Azad convened a conference where he placed proposals for overcoming the constitutional deadlock and, at the same time, challenged the Muslim League's claim to be the sole representative of the Muslims. The conference passed a resolution which included a declaration beginning: 'India, with its geographical and political boundaries, is an indivisible whole and as such it is the common homeland of all citizens, irrespective of race or religion, who are joint owners of its resources'.<sup>33</sup>

As Congress President, a position he had already occupied in 1923, Azad sought to narrow down the ever-increasing gulf separating the Congress and the Muslim League. He was also busy conducting negotiations with Stafford Cripps and the viceroy, Wavell, and again, after the War, with the Cabinet Mission. It was a role he enjoyed most, occupying centre-stage in the discussions which were of momentous importance. Cripps and Wavell thought well of him and counted on his support for their plans and proposals. The former thanked Azad for his help and friendship and the 'really marvellous way in which you stuck to your guns'. He was 'absolutely convinced' that but for the Maulana 'no arrangement would have been come to'.<sup>34</sup> Wavell found Azad 'very moderate and friendly'. He added: 'I have a great respect for him, and if all these politicians were of the same quality matters would be comparatively easy'.<sup>35</sup> Azad reciprocated these sentiments. Complimenting Cripps for his 'courtesy, tact and resourcefulness', he referred to his own part in the negotiations. 'I may tell you', he wrote on 22 July 1946:

that my attitude was throughout governed by two considerations. I regard the advent of the Labour Party to power an event of historic

importance. For the first time in history, there is the prospect of a peaceful transition to a Socialist order. I also feel that the Labour Government have on the whole been following a policy of democracy and freedom, and working for peace and stability in the modern world. It therefore deserves a trial and should not be unnecessarily embarrassed. I therefore felt it my duty to do everything possible to help it towards a peaceful settlement of the Indian problem.<sup>36</sup>

Sections of the Congress leadership were, however, sceptical of Azad's negotiating skills; in fact, Nehru's election as Congress president in 1946 is said to have been an expression of lack of confidence in Azad's ability to follow the dictates of the Congress Working Committee.<sup>37</sup> The judgement is unfair. Azad was, as Alan Campbell-Johnson recorded on 21 December 1947, just a 'titular head of the movement during the vital negotiations with both the Cripps and the Cabinet Missions'.<sup>38</sup> Others like Gandhi and Nehru, backed by Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad, called the shots, though Azad could bring round the All India Congress Committee and the Congress Working Committee to his point of view on a few issues, including the formation of a coalition government, composed of both Congress and the League.<sup>39</sup> But, in general, Azad was expected to play just a subservient role. His own initiatives were not welcomed. There were occasions when he was politely snubbed and his initiatives thwarted.<sup>40</sup> He shared many responsibilities but enjoyed just the trappings of power.

In a sense, therefore, Azad's position was similar to that of his Congress Muslim comrades who held positions of authority but were rarely allowed to influence *major* policy decisions. This was so in 1930, when Gandhi ignored the wishes of Ansari and his Nationalist Muslim Party in launching the civil disobedience movement.<sup>41</sup> Again, the Congress in general, and Nehru in particular, ignored the views of Azad on the formation of a Congress-League coalition ministry in UP. Azad was agonised. On reflection, he came to the conclusion that 'if the League's offer of co-operation had been accepted the Muslim League party would for all practical purposes merge with the Congress, Jawaharlal's action gave the Muslim League in the UP a new lease of life'.<sup>42</sup> Azad may not have been right in his assessment, but he was, at least implicitly, protesting against the way in which the 'Nationalist Muslim' perspective was disregarded at the upper echelons of the Congress leadership.

Azad suffered from a similar handicap in dealing with the Muslim

League. But there was an added problem: the stout refusal of the League diehards to recognise the position and status of the Muslims in Congress. Decried as 'renegades' and accused of a 'sell-out' to the 'Hindu' Congress, Azad was the obvious target of a merciless villification campaign. The Aligarh students and teachers, who had once idolised the Maulana when their pan-Islamic passions were heightened, turned against him. The Bareilwi *ulama*, averse to the Jamiyat al-*ulama*-Congress alliance, were his sworn critics.<sup>63</sup> And Jinnah, of course, refused to meet him and showed no sympathy for his viewpoint. 'Cannot you realise', he told Azad in July 1940, 'you are making a Muslim show-boy Congress president to give it colour that is national'.<sup>64</sup> In this way, recorded Campbell-Johnson:

Maulana Azad, a great scholar and a man of retiring disposition, has during the past ten years been a central figure of controversy. He embodied in his position and person perhaps the most important symbol of the Congress aspiration to be a nationalist as against a communal party. His status was thus the focal point of Gandhi's clash with Jinnah, who always maintained that politically no one but a member of the Muslim League could represent Muslim interests.<sup>65</sup>

Jinnah displayed lack of realism in insisting that the League was the sole representative of the Muslim community. How could it be in the light of the poor performance of his party in the 1937 elections? Besides, as Wavell pointed out candidly, 'after all, there is a Congress Ministry in the Province (Bombay) with the greatest proportion of Muslims, and 1 million votes were cast *against the Muslim League at the recent election as compared with about 6 million for the League* (emphasis added).<sup>66</sup>

Jinnah was on an equally weak turf in demanding the exclusion of the Congress Muslims from the Interim Government. The Congress Muslims may not have been, in Nehru's description, the 'soul of the Congress', but they occupied, from the days of Badruddin Tyabji and M.R. Sayani, an important enough position in the country's liberation struggle. They may not have always played a pivotal role, but they remained a priceless asset to the Congress movement. Their presence vindicated the Congress stand of representing the Indian nation rather than a segment of it. How could the Congress, then, forsake their close

allies for the illusory prospect of an accord with the League? How could Gandhi and Nehru, in particular, sacrifice personal friends and political comrades at the altar of political expediency? 'It has now become clear', wrote the viceroy on 1 October 1946, 'that Congress are unwilling to give way on the Nationalist Muslim issue. . .'.<sup>67</sup> The problem, he told Pethick-Lawrence, 'is an extraordinary intractable one'.<sup>68</sup> This was so because of Jinnah's obstinacy, his refusal to give way.

Sensing the mood in Congress circles, Cripps and Wavell urged Jinnah to give way on the question, and in exchange to secure his other points.<sup>69</sup> Wavell went to the extent of explaining that the Congress would not, in fact, appoint a 'Nationalist' Muslim in the end, if Jinnah conceded their right to do so. The Congress had not given any such assurance.<sup>70</sup> Even if it had, Jinnah would have surely found some other excuse to embarrass the Congress. An exasperated Pethick-Lawrence informed Cripps on the eve of the Viceroy-Jinnah meeting on 1 October that 'the Nationalist Muslim still seems the wrecking horse'.<sup>71</sup> So it had been from the days of the Simla Conference and **thereafter**

Azad and his Muslim comrades must have been comforted by the Congress stand, but they would hardly derive comfort from the vicious communal atmosphere that gripped the country. The Muslim League campaign was gaining momentum day after day, and the country was caught up in a bitter and violent confrontation. Hindus and Muslims, having lived in peace and amity for centuries, were now killing each other. It was not the India of anybody's dream. It was most certainly not what the Congress Muslims had bargained for through years of selfless devotion to the cause of unity, independence and communal harmony. There was a sense of despair, of gloom, of hopelessness as the country drifted towards partition. The feeling was no less pronounced in the writings and statements of the Congress Muslims.

With their limited constituency, which had steadily shrunk over the years, Azad and his faithful band of followers could do little to influence the course of events. The inexorable march towards the vivisection of the Indian nation could not be halted by the efforts of an individual or a group. Nor could the communal tide be stemmed by the Mahatma or the Maulana in 1946-47. Whatever moves they made to heal the wounds had a mere symbolic value.

Besides, once the Congress agreed to the partition plan, the reasons of which remain a subject of controversy, the position of its Muslim supporters became vulnerable. They became politically irrelevant and



their stand lost much of its legitimacy. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan protested loudly and passionately; others did so quietly. Azad maintained his studious silence and aristocratic poise at the Congress Working Committee meeting on 2 June 1947, when the Mountbatten Plan for Partition was ratified. He could do little at the time to prevent this 'abject surrender', particularly after he saw Gandhi and Nehru dither in the face of the communal onslaught.<sup>72</sup> Dispirited, defeated and detached from the humdrum of political happenings, his mood was captured by Campbell-Johnson who recorded the details of a meeting on 16 September 1947. 'Throughout this long meeting', noted Johnson, 'Maulana Azad, the Moslem elder statesman in the Congress, sat silent and impassive, as he always does, looking, with his pointed beard, just like Cardinal Riebelieu'.<sup>73</sup>

The dawn of freedom and independence had arrived. But amidst the gaiety, celebrations and festivities one could not forget 'the sad face of Maulana Azad, to whom the occasion was something of a tragedy, sticking out from the sea of happy faces like a gaunt and ravaged rock'.<sup>74</sup> Azad could well have recalled his own passage from *Ghubar-e Khair* which summed up the story of his life.

In religion, in literature, in politics, in everyday thought, wherever I have to go, I have to go alone. On no path can I go with the caravans of the day. . . . Whichever way I walk, I get so far ahead of the (caravan) that when I turn to look back, I see nothing, but the dust of the way, and even that is the dust raised by the speed of my own passage.<sup>75</sup>

## NOTES

1 Cited in Kenneth Cragg, *Counsels in Contemporary Islam* (Edinburgh, 1965), pp. 132-33, and Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, eds. Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 29; Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, *Zikr-e-Azad* (Calcutta: Daftur 'Azad Hind', 1965), pp. 132-33. See the collection of articles in Rasheeduddin Khan (ed.), *Abul Kalam Azad: Ek Hamageer Shaksyat* (Delhi: Taraqqi Urdu Board, 1989).

2 Cragg, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

3 M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 302.

4 There is considerable historical literature on Mohamed Ali, though much of it is analytically poor. Mohamed Ali's own writings are impressive. Besides

the *Comrade* and *Hamdard* which he edited with distinction, Mohamed Ali wrote with unfailing regularity to friends and political associates. Some of his letters and speeches are included in the three volumes edited by me. In addition, Afzal Iqbal, Rais Ahmad Jafri and Shan Muhammad have put together his writings. For a detailed bibliography, see my *Mohamed Ali: Ideology and Politics* (Delhi: Manohar, 1981).

5 For example, the *fatwa* on the boycott of government-aided educational institutions. *Khilafat*, 1 November 1920.

6 In response to a suggestion to write a historical monograph, Mohamed Ali stated: 'This is not the time for historical writing. This is the moment to create history'. The implicit suggestion in this remark is obvious. Mohamed Ali to Abdul Majid Daryabadi, 1916, quoted in I. Askari, 'Mohamed Ali: Ek Sada-e-Shikast Saaz', *Aligarh Magazine*, 1960-61, and A.M. Daryabadi, *Mohamed Ali: Zati Diary ke chand Aunaaq* (Hyderabad, 1943), p.14.

7 Quoted in Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad*, p. 180.

8 To James DuBoulay, 18 February 1919, Hasan (ed.), *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics*, vol. 2, p. 193.

9 Hasan (ed.), *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics*, vol. 3.

10 See my *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885-1930* (Delhi: Manohar, 1991).

11 Quoted in Douglas, *op.cit.*, p. 100.

12 For a revealing account of Azad's early political life, see Rajat K. Ray, 'Revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists and Bolsheviks: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Political Underworld in Calcutta, 1905-1925', Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1985), pp. 101-24.

13 Home Poll. D., F. No. 31, December 1914, National Archives of India (NAI).

14 Wilayat Ali to Mohamed Ali, 20 August 1915, Mohamed Ali Papers, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

15 Mohamed Ali, *My Life*, p.2.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 37 and Afzal Iqbal (ed.), *Select Writings and Speeches of Mohamed Ali* (Lahore: 1946), p. 170.

20 *My Life*, p. 96.

21 It would appear that Mohamed Ali met Iqbal during 1912-14 when he made frequent trips to Lahore on account of the *Comrade* security case being discussed in the Punjab High Court. The earliest letter on record written by Mohamed Ali to Iqbal was on 5 April 1913. See Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics* (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 56-7. When Mohamed Ali was released from jail in late December 1919, Iqbal wrote a poem hailing his freedom:

Hai aseri eitebar-e-afza jo ho fitrat buland  
Qatra-e-neesan hai zindaan-e-sadaf se arjumanad

Iqbal's poems were often published in *Hamdard*. In its issue of 12 August 1927, Mohamed Ali wrote 'Iqbal: My Teacher', an article reflecting his political differences with the poet. He was particularly sour on account of Iqbal's refusal to assume charge of the Jamia Millia Islamia which had been set up to symbolize the revolt against Aligarh. For a well-informed and perceptive essay, see Abu Salman Shahjahanpuri, 'Maulana Mohamed Ali and Allama Iqbal', in Abu Salman Shahjahanpuri (ed.), *Rais al-Ahrar: Sawanah-o-Khudmaat* (Karachi: Government National College, n.d.), pp. 241-87.

22 Daryabadi, *Zaati Diary*, p. 14; To Daryabadi, 22 May and 25 July 1916, Hasan (ed.), *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics*, vol. 1, pp. 269-76.

23 Mohamed Ali, *My Life*, p. 18; To Daryabadi, 22 May, 25 July 1916, *ibid.*, pp. 269-76.

24 To Gandhi, 20 February 1918, *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics*, vol. 1, p. 240.

25 *Al-Hilal*, 23 October 1912.

26 Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, p. 459.

27 Mohamed Ali, *My Life*, pp. 163-64.

28 Cited in Douglas, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

29 Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics*, pp. 120-21.

30 Mohamed Ali to the Sultan of Turkey, 28 May 1920, *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics*, vol. 3, p. 88.

31 *Comrade* (Calcutta), 14 January 1911.

32 Mohamed Ali, *My Life*, p. 46.

33 To Tilak, 12 November 1916, *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics*, vol. 1, p. 292.

34 Hasan, *Mohamed Ali: Ideology and Politics*, pp. 28-29.

35 Quoted in Afzal Iqbal, *Life and Times of Mohamed Ali* (Delhi: 1978; reprint), p. 308.

36 This idea is borrowed from the brilliant introduction by Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: 1969 edn.).

37 'India's Message to France', Iqbal (ed.), *Writings and Speeches*, p. 158; also, *Comrade*, 13 May 1913.

38 'A People's right to Live', *ibid.*, p. 171.

39 Mohamed Ali to Chelmsford, 24 April 1919, MAP.

40 Mohamed Ali observed: 'Islam united Muslims by offering a set of common ideals and offered the only rational basis for unity and cooperation among its followers. The sympathies of a Muslim are co-extensive with his religion because they have been bred into him by the inspiring spirit of his creed'. *Comrade*, 12 April 1913.

41 See my *A Nationalist Conscience: M.A. Ansari, the Congress and the Raj* (Delhi: Manohar, 1987), pp. 170-73.

- 42 Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head), p. 117.
- 43 *Comrade*, 16 October 1925; Afzal Iqbal (ed.), *Select Speeches*, pp. 331-32, 337.
- 44 See Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing: A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Mohammad Iqbal* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1963), pp. 47-48.
- 45 Douglas, *op.cit.*, p. 196.
- 46 Hasan, *A Nationalist Conscience*, p. 129.
- 47 Douglas, *op.cit.*, p. 223.
- 48 Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom: The complete version* (Delhi: Orient Longman, February 1988), p. 248.
- 49 See my *Mohamed Ali: Ideology and Politics*, p. 102.
- 50 'It was a misfortune for India', wrote Nehru, 'that he (Mohamed Ali) left the country for Europe in the summer of 1928. A great effort was then made to solve the communal problem. If Mohamed Ali had been here then, it is just conceivable that matters would have shaped differently'. Nehru added: 'For whatever the differences on the communal question might have been, there were very few differences on the political issue. He was devoted to the idea of Indian independence. And because of the common political outlook, it was always possible to come to some mutually satisfactory arrangement with him on the communal issue. There was nothing in common between him and the reactionaries who pose as the champions of communal interests'. *An Autobiography*, p. 120.
- 51 Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 120.
- 52 Box No. 2, Benthall Papers, Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge.
- 53 Nicholas Mansergh (ed.), *The Transfer of Power* (hereafter *TP*), 1942-7 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office), vol. 1, p. 293. For an account of the Conference, see Humayun Kabir, *Muslim Politics, 1906-42* (Calcutta: Gupta Rahman & Gupta, 1944).
- 54 *TP*, vol. 8, p. 103.
- 55 Wavell to J. Colville, 8/9 July 1946, and Note by Wavell, 19 August 1946, *ibid.*, p. 23; see also Datta, *Maulana Azad*, p. 171.
- 56 To S. Cripps, 22 July 1946, *ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 102-3.
- 57 Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, vol. one: 1889-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 326.
- 58 Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1951), p. 254.
- 59 To Wavell, 9 July 1946, *TP*, vol. 8, p. 24.
- 60 On differences between the Mahatma and the Maulana first over the Quit India movement and later over the conduct of the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission, see Datta, *Maulana Azad*, pp. 168, 174, 175, 176. For Gandhi's unfavourable response to Azad's proposal for alleviating Muslim fears, see Jenkins to Abell, 28 August 1945, reporting on an intercepted letter from Gandhi to Azad, *TP*, vol. 6, p. 76. Azad's own version of his differences with Nehru

is quite revealing. For a refutation of the Maulana's thesis, see Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, pp. 227-29, and S.R. Mehrotra, 'Nehru and the Partition of India, 1935-47', in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright (eds.), *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-1947* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), pp. 178-179.

61 Hasan, *A Nationalist Conscience*, pp. 208-9.

62 *India Wins Freedom*, p. 170.

63 S. Jamaluddin, ' "Mr Azad": The Bareilvi perspective' (Paper presented at the Azad Conference held at Jamia Millia Islamia, December 1989).

64 Datta, *Maulana Azad*, pp. 164, 171; Douglas, *op.cit.*, p. 295.

65 *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 254.

66 Wavell to A. Clow (Bombay), 7 October 1946, *TP*, vol. 8, p. 675.

67 To Pethick-Lawrence, 1 October 1946, *ibid.*, p. 634.

68 To Pethick-Lawrence, 1 October 1946, *ibid.*, p. 636.

69 Wavell to Abell, 1 October 1946, *ibid.*, p. 631.

70 Wavell to Pethick-Lawrence, 29 September 1946, *ibid.*, p. 625.

71 Pethick-Lawrence to Cripps, 30 September 1939, *ibid.*, p. 629.

72 *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 202-3.

73 *Mission with Mountbatten*, p. 194.

74 Syed Mahmud, quoted in Douglas, *op.cit.*, p. 238.

75 Quoted in Douglas, *op.cit.*, pp. 232-33.

## Appraisal of Azad's Religio-Political Trajectory

Ali Ashraf

It is an irony of history that Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, two outstanding Muslim leaders in the twentieth century, started from opposite ends, and instead of meeting at a point midway, their careers culminated in reverse and opposite directions. In the words of an Urdu poet: 'When I became a *kafir*, that *kafir*, in turn, became a Muslim'. It was as if they had changed their roles. Jinnah, who began as a secularist and a 'messenger of Hindu-Muslim unity', turned separatist. He, more than any other person or factor, was responsible for the division of the country on religious, communal lines. Azad, in his early writings, described the Congress as a Hindu body.<sup>1</sup> While exhorting Muslims to work in unison with the Hindus for the country's freedom, he preached pan-Islamism and, as a corollary, their religious duty to organise themselves as a separate community under their own *Imam* (or *Ameer*), the supreme leader. As the ideologue and the most forceful advocate of the Khilafat cause, he put forward his claim to be the Khalifa's deputy and the *Imam*, the Supremo of the faithful in India.<sup>2</sup> But the subsequent change in Azad's politics and ideology, including his adoption of unalloyed secularism (even secular universalism) as his new credo, cost him his following. As if inevitably, the mass of his followers turned to Jinnah, the new separatist, who became their supreme leader, the *Quaid-e-Azam*.

But neither Jinnah nor Azad got rid of their respective original impulses and/or their consequences. Jinnah's address on the inauguration of his newly-created state was a call for secularism.<sup>3</sup> He did not want Pakistan to become a theocracy. But it was beyond him to put in leash the ghost that had been let loose. How did Azad fare in the various stages of his life's journey? A number of studies on him have appeared during his centenary celebrations. But works dedicated to such occasions have their own limitations. And so the question remains unanswered.

# I

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's place in Indian history rests primarily on two factors: his contribution to India's struggle for freedom and his translation and exegesis of the Quran. On the surface, the two appear to be unrelated. But, in Azad's own understanding, the two were integrally connected, the one following from the other. 'My opinions', he claimed, 'have never undergone any change, nor my journey suffered from any signs of uncertainty between the right and the left. . . Those beliefs, derived from the eternal and invariable teachings of the inspired word and the divine message, can never change.'<sup>4</sup>

Both parts of this statement need qualification. Later in this paper, the important shifts in his views during the two main stages of his ideological-political development will be discussed. As for the teachings of the 'inspired word and the divine message', they may be eternal and unchangeable but not their comprehension and interpretation by man. After all, these functions of the human mind can never lay claim to be free from the limitations of time and space.

On another occasion, the Maulana himself recognised these limitations and referred to their effect on his own interpretation of the Quran. In the introduction to the second edition of the *Tarjuman al-Quran*, he observed:

The greatest proof of the inadequacy and fallibility of the understanding of man is that his works can never claim to have attained perfection. One day he completes some work and believes to have given the final touches to it. But looking at it the other day, his very standpoint appears to have changed and numerous drawbacks are found therein. . . . This was exactly the case when after a number of years, I again looked at the first volume of the *Tarjuman al-Quran*. Consequently, the whole translation and the

exegesis had to be revised and the entire thing has now acquired a new content and form.<sup>5</sup>

Notice that the Maulana made a specific reference to one subject—*Ilahiyaat* or the concept of God-head—which had to be rewritten. In actual fact, however, there was more than one issue on which his interpretation underwent major changes. As only one, the last version of his translation-cum-exegesis is available (the earlier two having been destroyed in police raids and confiscations), the evolution and change in his understanding of the Quran is generally not taken into account. Still, for purposes of comparison it is possible to base oneself on the *Al-Hilal* and his other writings of the period. A diligent student of Azad's exegesis and his writings and utterances on socio-political issues will often find himself wondering whether the latter followed his Quranic interpretations or was it the other way round. The point, however, is that the two—his exegesis of the Holy Book and his political practice—can only be understood and analysed in their inter-connection and not in separation from each other.

## II

The ideological and religious development of individuals is a complex process. Ideas overlap and intertwine before separating from each other. Hence, it is difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between various stages in a person's evolution. In Azad's case, pan-Islamism and secular nationalism stand out as the main criteria for dividing the two main stages in his life. In the two stages, he followed two different methodologies and principles of exegesis. While in the second stage he did not work out his methodology in so many words, it can still be deduced from his work. In the first, however, they were laid down clearly.

Like any other student, Azad was not oblivious to the different interpretations of the Quran that appeared over time and often within the same period. He ascribed this to the deviation and drifting away from the teachings of the Prophet. 'Gradually, therefore, they lost sight of the essence of the Quran, and in course of time, a very low standard of its study and understanding came to be in vogue'.<sup>6</sup> Again,

from the early centuries of Islam to the latest epoch all the exegetists followed a method of exegesis which represents a continuous chain of a declining standard of thought. This situation was in reality the natural result of the general intellectual decline of the Muslims. But what had brought this about? The early period



had not yet come to an end when the wind of the civilisation of Rome and Iran began to blow. And soon the translations of the Greek scientific works led to an epoch of artificial sciences and arts. . . All kinds of confusions arose and the more the efforts were made to diffuse them, the more confounded they became.<sup>7</sup>

In Azad's opinion, therefore, the way to attain the true spirit of the Divine Book was to return to the true essence, remove the blinkers of artificiality and obtain the knowledge of the natural. Because 'whenever the question about the real meaning of a book arises, preference should naturally be given to the understanding of those who have learnt its meaning from the author (*Sahib-e Kitaab*) of the book.'<sup>8</sup>

This might have been a credible answer to the question. But what if differences were amongst those who had learnt the meaning from the original authority itself? Syed Abul Aala Maudoodi, in the introduction to his exegesis, the *Tafheemat al-Quran*, observed:

In the interpretation and exegesis of the injunctions of the Quran, not only among the later-day writers but among the *Imams* (authorities of religious law) and the followers of the Prophet's Companions, and among the Companions themselves, so many differences are to be found that hardly a single verse of injunctions exists whose interpretation is acceptable to all of them.<sup>9</sup>

Maudoodi did not explain why this was so. Shibli Nomani, on the other hand, traced the roots of these differences to socio-political processes and situations. He pointed out that the schisms that took place in Islam, for example, between the Sunnis and the Shias, were primarily due to socio-political reasons. He did not attach much importance to the questions as to which of the many schools represented original Islam in letter and spirit. According to him, 'all of these had already emerged during the Prophet's lifetime in an embryonic form'.<sup>10</sup>

Shibli related that when objections were raised against the brutalities committed by the rulers of the Umayyad dynasty, the latter took their stand on some verses of the Quran, passing on the responsibility for their actions to God on the plea that man does nothing except what Allah wills him to do. The victims of their regime of terror, however, sought to tear off the facade of this theological defence of governmental repression. Thus the Mutazila quoted the Quran to the effect that man by virtue of his reason and understanding was free to make his choice, and, furthermore, was

responsible for his actions.<sup>11</sup> In this way, Shibli discovered a close relationship between theological and philosophical controversies, on the one hand, and social and political issues, on the other.

Preceding Shibli by a few years, Syed Ahmad Khan evolved an objective and dynamic method of studying the Quran. His fundamental proposition was that there could be no contradiction between the Quran, the *Word of God*, and the objective world, as we know it, being the *Work of God*.<sup>12</sup> This implied that the revealed book had to be understood not only through the medium of Arabic as spoken at the time of the Prophet, but also in the light of and in conformity with the progress made in material sciences. Thus comprehending the *Word of God* was made subject to the progress in man's understanding of the material and social world. In this highly unorthodox and dynamic interpretation of the Quran, human reason was given primacy as well as an active role. In the very first issue of his journal *Tahzeeb al-Akhlaaq*, Sir Syed wrote: 'After all these considerations I came to the conclusion that the only means of gaining knowledge, convictions or faith is reason.'<sup>13</sup>

Making reason the sole guide in the cognition of reality, Sir Syed had to face the inescapable question: if reason is proven to be both fallible and changing, how can one distinguish between right and wrong and find one's bearing in this world? He tackled this question with characteristic boldness and optimism. He wrote:

The question was how to guarantee against mistakes being committed by reason. I admit that in reality there may not be any guarantee against this. But when reason is applied in practice, the mistakes of the reason of one person are corrected by the reason of another; the mistakes of the reason of one age are corrected by the reason of another age. On the other hand, when knowledge, conviction or faith is not based on reason, then it is impossible to arrive at them in any age or period.<sup>14</sup>

Azad had to consider a similar issue raised by a reader of the *Al-Hilal*. It concerned the application of reason in determining the veracity or otherwise of the *Hadith* (Tradition) of the Prophet. Azad wrote that it was 'a highly dangerous mistake of principle' to make reason the arbiter of the Prophet's Traditions. A *Hadith* may or may not stand scrutiny on the basis of its own criteria, its rules of narration, and its norms of judging the worth and reliability of the chain of narrators.

'But how can you determine the truth or falsity of an incident by referring it to your reason, by considering whether it makes sense to this or that individual or not'.<sup>15</sup> Azad was, in reality, arguing against the position of Sir Syed, who criticised the norms of narrating *Hadith* wherein the character and reliability of each narrator from the Prophet down to the compiler was considered but no attempt was made to ascertain if an incident stood the test of reason.

In determining both the meaning of the Quran and the accuracy of the *Hadith*, Azad depended on *authority* rather than reason as his guide. Thus he not only rejected Sir Syed and Shibli but also negated important medieval scholastics like Ghazali who asserted the right of each individual 'to deduce the meaning of the Quran according to his own understanding and within the limitations of his own reason'. In the controversy between reason and authority (*aql-o-naql*), Azad, in the *Al-Hilal* phase, had chosen his place among the votaries of the latter.

In the course of his ideological-political development, Azad was able to outgrow this stage, though he hardly seems to have recognised this fact. Years later, when he published his third and final version of the exegesis, the *Tarjuman al-Quran*, he referred to his earlier view in the *Al-Hilal* in the following glowing terms:

In 1912 I started the *Al-Hilal* and a new way of studying and understanding the Quran came into light which was, in fact, not new.<sup>16</sup>

What was this 'new way' of understanding the Quran? And to what extent and in which direction did it mould the views of Azad on the social and political problems facing the Muslims and the country?

In the first few issues of *Al-Hilal*, Azad avoided elucidating his political views. However, as a result of persistent queries by readers, the fifth issue of *Al-Hilal* (8 September 1912) carried a long article entitled: 'Reply to a Letter Concerning The Objectives and Political Teachings of *Al-Hilal*'. It stated:

You observe that political questions should be kept separate from religion. But if they are separated what will remain with us? We have learnt our political ideas also from religion. . . We believe that every idea which is derived from any source other than the Quran is sheer heresy, and this includes also politics . . . (emphasis added). Islam has given to man a complete and

comprehensive law, and there is no problem of human life for which it does not provide a solution. . . According to our belief, a Muslim who in his practice and faith accepts any party or teaching other than the Quran as his guide, is a heretic and not Muslim. . .<sup>17</sup>

But, then, if the Quran was to be strictly followed, where did Azad and the Indian Muslims stand on concrete questions?

We are not with anybody but only with God. . . Islam is so lofty and sublime that its followers need not follow the Hindus to determine their political policy. . . They need not join any party. They are the ones who make the world join their party and follow their path.<sup>18</sup>

Defining that path, Azad said:

According to Islam, only that government is just which is not despotic but is under the control of a community or nation. . . Therefore, it should be the duty of the Muslims to try to achieve lawful freedom, and according to the dictates of their religion, not to rest till they attain parliamentary government.

In sum,

these are the principles on which we can base our political policy, and for the sake of which we need not stretch our begging hands either before the moderate Hindus or before the extremists. . . We will do our best for the country's progress and freedom in complete accord with our religious principles. But our efforts will have nothing to do with causing mischief, disturbance, disorder and revolt. The Quran teaches us not to create disturbance on earth after peace is established.<sup>19</sup>

And the British Government

has certainly established peace under which we freely observe our religious obligations. . . It is incumbent on us, therefore, to keep away from those who create disturbance in the country, be they Hindu anarchists or criminal groups, and if possible, try to

stop and repulse them.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time, Muslims should

be helpful to all those who perform good deeds whether it is the Government or any other community.<sup>21</sup>

This detailed reply is the only comprehensive and integrated statement of Azad's political views; it constitutes his manifesto of the early *Al-Hilal* period. Its main points may be summarised as follows:

- ✧ (a) Lawful freedom with Parliamentary form of government; (b) Support to Government in its positive actions; (c) Co-operation with 'any other community' (i.e., the Hindus) in the performance of 'good deeds'; (d) Opposition to what he calls 'Hindu anarchists' (i.e., political terrorists).

These views coincided with the policies of the moderates who dominated the Congress at the time. The major difference lay in Azad's insistence on political separatism based on religion, his exhortation to Muslims that they 'need not join any political party other than Islam'.

Azad's first elaborate statement on pan-Islamism was made two years later in a speech at Calcutta on 27 October 1914. This speech is significant for two points of principle. In the first place, the Indian Muslims were related to their brethren in Turkey not merely because both belonged to the same religious fraternity. A more fundamental relationship was established on the principle that every nation must have a political centre; the Turkish Khilafat was the political centre of the international Muslim community.<sup>22</sup> The other point, a corollary to the above, was that 'no movement confined to a country, no local movement can today benefit Islam;' (or) the Muslim... nation, which is spread from the deserts of Arabia to the Chinese Wall. In fact whatever 'local endeavours are being made today whether in Egypt or Turkey, or in this land of darkness that is India, are all according to my belief made under the spell of that great sorcerer, the Satan'.<sup>23</sup>

Was this an extension of that demagoguery which was sought to be put into service against the acceptance of the Charter for the Aligarh Muslim University? Carried away by the spell of his own words, Azad had proposed that the three million rupees collected for the University Fund be diverted in aid of the victims of Italian aggression in the War

of Tripoli.

In any case, opposition to local endeavours had its limitations. For, after all, the most important among the 'local endeavours' in India were the freedom movement and Hindu-Muslim unity. These, however, came to be considered as part of the general task of the World of Islam and a condition for its fulfilment. It is, perhaps, the failure to appreciate this aspect which has prompted some writers to negate the importance of the Khilafat in Azad's total philosophy and some others to reduce the Khilafat movement to a corollary and a means to achieving the freedom of India.<sup>24</sup>

What these writers fail to see is the thick streak of Muslim separatism inherent in the first stage of Azad's political philosophy. More basic than Hindu-Muslim unity and freedom was the precondition for their attainment—the unification and consolidation of the Indian Muslims as a distinct community under their own leader owing allegiance to the Khilafat. Equally, Azad's insistence in *Al-Hilal* on the right of affiliation for the proposed Muslim University at Aligarh was part of his mission to bring all Muslim educational institutions under one umbrella so as to facilitate the socio-religious and political consolidation of the community. Azad lamented that, unlike other countries where Muslims constituted a nation and the state as a section of the Islamic world and its centre, the ten crores of Indian Muslims who formed the single largest community of Islam in the world were spending their lives in India in a manner

that does not bind them together, they are not united and organised as a community, they have no *qauid* (leader), no commander. They are a crowd, a rabble scattered among the population of India. Certainly this is an un-Islamic and irreligious life which this entire community is living.<sup>25</sup>

Azad stated that the solution to the problem had dawned upon him by the end of 1914. 'I was convinced', he said, 'that unless this problem is solved, no effort and no endeavour on our part will be successful'.<sup>26</sup> The first step in this connection was the setting up of an *Imarat* and the appointment of an *Ameer*. Azad claimed to have persuaded Maulana Mahmud Hasan of Deoband to accept the post so that the work of organising Indian Muslims may be started. But the scheme came to naught when the Maulana left for Mecca.

Azad spent the following years in Ranchi, where he 'was not unmindful of thinking out practical steps to solve this problem'. Having

failed to set up an *Imarat* on a country-wide scale, he decided to make a start with the formation of provincial organisations. 'At about the same time', Azad recalled, 'my young friend and comrade Maulana Abul Mohasin Mohammad Sajjad Saheb met me in Ranchi and immediately began making efforts to give it a practical shape'.<sup>27</sup>

The *Imarat-e Sharia* was first set up in Bihar. It is believed that this organisation, merely quasi-judicial in character, was concerned only with issuing *fatawa* (religious opinions) on problems of Muslim Personal Law. It was not political in nature, it is said.<sup>28</sup> But this was not how Azad visualised the role of *Imarat-e Sharia*. According to him:

On the one hand, there is the judicial function, and on the other, the function of *Imarat* (state leadership). The relationship between the two is that of the particular to the general. The judicial function is included within and subject to the objectives of the *Imarat*. But the latter cannot be achieved by fulfilling the judicial function. What I am discussing here is the absence among the Muslims of the *Imarat* and not merely of the judicial function. For the latter the mere appointment of the so-called *Qazis* or the setting up of quasi-courts would be sufficient.<sup>29</sup>

What, then, was Azad's conception of the *Imarat*?

The matter needs a detailed discussion. . . This I have already done in the booklet on *Khilafat*. A more elaborate and detailed treatment of the issue will be found in the *Tafseer al-Quran*.<sup>30</sup>

In Azad's scheme, *Imarat* was political authority, state power, pure and simple. It was a part, a section of the universal *Khilafat* of Islam, representing it in separate countries and functioning accordingly and under it. But in countries like India where Muslims constituted a minority and did not hold political power, the *Imarat* owed allegiance to the *Khilafat* and, at the same time, maintained a relationship with the country's government under a collective agreement. Azad derived the principle of this *Imarat* (or *Imamat*, the other term which he used interchangeably) from the Quran. 'The Book (i.e., the Quran) and the Traditions of the Prophet', he pointed out, 'teach us three fundamental principles of collective life:

- 1 All should unanimously agree on a learned and enterprising

Musalman to make him their *Imam*;

- 2 They should truly and sincerely accept all his teachings;
- 3 They should unquestioningly obey and implement all his directives based on the Quran and the Prophet's Traditions.

The tongues of all should be speechless, only he, the *Imam*, should be speaking. The minds of all should be closed, only his mind should operate. The people should have neither tongues, nor minds, but only hearts which should accept (what is told) and hands and feet to toil and work and run about.<sup>31</sup>

This was how Azad conceived a truly Islamic, collective life for Indian Muslims. Did Azad seek to reconcile his stand for Parliamentary democracy in a free India with this speechless, thoughtless, blind but organised community of Muslim within that body politic following unquestioningly their own *Imam*? Inevitably, both positions emanated from the Quran. There is no evidence to show that Azad was conscious of this contradiction or shift in his position. Some may suggest that his mind functioned in compartments, and that each one of these took care of its own affairs. But here was the case of *one* single set of problems: the form of government and the State in the country and the form of collective life the Muslims were to lead within that. Will it not be more reasonable to ascribe an integral character to Azad's thinking that Indian Muslims as a minority would be more effective and secure in a Parliamentary system if they functioned not individually but as one organised mass with a separate leader of their own?

In any case, as Abdur Razzaq Mahhabadi has confirmed, Hindu-Muslim unity, considered to be essential for the country's freedom, could be achieved in this perspective only as a result of an agreement between the *Imam* (or, *Ameer*) and the Hindu leadership. It was therefore neither a slip of the pen nor the result of political naivety that Azad, while editing *Lisan al-Sidq*, described the Congress as a Hindu body.<sup>32</sup> Seen in this context, it is not correct to see the Khilafat as a mere 'symbol', as V.N. Datta does,<sup>33</sup> or as a mere means of drawing the Indian Muslims in the freedom movement. It had far deeper significance.

In Azad's system of ideas, at least in the first stage of development, the principle of Khilafat occupied the same fundamental importance as did faith in the Unity of God and in His Prophet Mohammad. He derived the principle of Khilafat, a central state authority for the entire Islamic world, from the very Law of existence of the



Universe. According to him:

In every region and Sector of the Universe, a unique system of divine power and precepts prevails. This is known as the law of centre or the law of circles. . . The existence and life of the circle is dependent on that of the central body. . . The system of the *Shariat* of Islam has been modelled exactly on this law of centre. . . In belief, the main centre was declared to be the faith in the Unity of God round which the circles of all other beliefs rest. . . On this basis, for the whole of earth, there had to be one ruling Khalifa for all the Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

It has been argued that in the light of the liberation movements in the Middle East, as also the constitutional reform movements in Turkey itself, Azad did not attach much importance to the Ottoman Khilafat. This view is not supported in Azad's own writings of the period. He was not unaware of what was happening in Turkey and the Arab countries. But, then, he was unhappy with 'local endeavours' being made 'whether in Egypt or Turkey'. He insisted that 'today in the light of the *Shariat*, they (the Ottoman Sultans) are the Khalifa and Imam of all the Muslims of the world. Whosoever transgresses (the law of) obedience to them (Ottoman Sultans) throws off the yoke of Islam'.<sup>35</sup>

Azad claimed, at the same time, that the movement for their defence and restoration of the Khilafat in India was intertwined with the struggle for the country's freedom. This, however, has to be seen not irrespective of but with all the intermediary steps in the process: Islam's universal Khilafat, the *Imarat* as its emissary and an essential stage for organising the Muslims as a distinct collective, corporate body, whose *Ameer*, the supreme arbiter, would enter into an agreement with the Hindu leaders. This was how movements for the defence of the Khilafat and the freedom of India were to be co-related as *two separate factors in a federal unity*. Azad insisted that without this federal concept of Hindu-Muslim unity, the success of the freedom struggle was uncertain.<sup>36</sup>

The abolition of the Khilafat by the Turks themselves undermined the edifice of Azad's religious ideology and political schemes. In the last of the series of articles in the *Zamindar* of Lahore, Azad refused to accept the event as real. He ascribed it to the disinformation campaign conducted by the Western media. He promised a religious interpretation of the Turkish National Assembly decision in the next

issue of the paper.<sup>38</sup> But the promised article never appeared. In the face of hard realities and rapidly-changing political scenario, the article could not be written.

Believing the Turkish decision to be a road-block, the Ali brothers were determined to find a way out. They organised a *Motamar-e Islami* (a World Islamic Conference) hoping to persuade Ibn Saud to hand over the control of the Holy Places of Islam to an elected Khilafat. But Azad did not entertain hopes of building castles in the sands of Arabia. He realised the futility of the efforts made by the Ali brothers. The Khilafat movement had reached a dead end, and the logic of the situation had left no choice except a total retreat. Mohamed Ali later complained that Azad had 'suddenly changed' his stand. He wrote:

Pandit Motilal, the Chairman of the Swaraj Party, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the President of the *Jamiyat-i Khilafat*, issued a statement under their joint signatures, about the formation of a new party. . . As to its objectives and the means of achieving them, there was nothing novel about this party. . . Its only originality lay in the provision which asked its members to break away from all communal organisations.<sup>39</sup>

Mohamed Ali was not wrong in discerning the significance of the National Union. For Azad that was the parting of ways, the crossing of the watershed. But it was not a sudden great leap as Mohamed Ali seemed to believe. It came about after a somewhat long and tortuous process of introspection.

### III

What were the main points in Azad's political beliefs which symbolised a break from the past?

The freedom of India was never in question. The concept of freedom, of course, had kept changing for the nationalist leaders. Azad, too, as we have seen in his early *Al-Hilal* writings, held moderate political views. Passing through the Khilafat and Satyagraha movements and up to the formation of the National Union, complete independence had not yet become the demand of any important section of the nationalist movement. Azad did not think or act differently. But there was much in common between Gandhi and Azad. While the former had evolved non-violence as a technique, as a means, in course of time it became

for him an end in itself. Azad, too, declared that if asked to choose between freedom and Hindu-Muslim unity, he would choose the latter. In this case, too, like Gandhi's non-violence, means gained precedence over the end. There may have been an element of rhetoric in the way Azad put the matter at the Special Session of the Congress in 1923. But it was nevertheless symbolic of the importance he attached to it.<sup>40</sup>

It has to be noted, however, that from the *Al-Hilal* through the Khilafat phase to the National Union, Azad's concept of Hindu-Muslim unity underwent a qualitative change. It was no more conceived in terms of federal unity of separately organised religious communities.

In this secular, post-pan-Islamic phase, too, the religious-ideological basis of Azad's policies and activities had to be found in the Quran. This necessitated a new exegesis, a new interpretation of the Book of God. Incidentally, the earlier exegesis was destroyed in police raids and confiscations of papers. Azad has related that

on the first occasion, the translation and exegesis of eight *Suras* (sections) of the Quran, in manuscript form, were confiscated in 1916 during the raid on the eve of the detention in Ranchi. The second arrest took place on 10 December 1921. . . The complete book was ready. But once again raid and confiscation. On my release after 15 months. . . it took prolonged correspondence and efforts to get back the papers. But they were returned in such condition that the whole thing was virtually destroyed.<sup>41</sup>

The dates are significant. The first set of eight *suras*, confiscated in 1916, represented his understanding of the *Al-Hilal* period. For once, when the complete book was ready, it was again confiscated with his arrest at the end of 1921. This was at the height of the Khilafat and Non-Co-operation movements. This version of the exegesis, according to Azad's own admission, contained 'a more detailed' elaboration of his views on the Khilafat and *Imarat*, discussed in the booklet *Masala-e Khilafat*. The manuscript of the book was destroyed in the police raid but the development of events had soon thrown the contents of the discussion into the dustbin of history.

In jail, the story of his self-imposed solitary confinement has been told by Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi. The period of Azad's mental crisis had begun. The solitude was not sought and utilised for recollecting the threads of his destroyed exegesis. Even after release, for quite sometime, Azad was not ready to take up the work of writing yet

another version of the exegesis. The attempt to explain this away by his preoccupation with political activities or by disinclination to take up a work already twice completed, is unconvincing. At best, it is a superficial explanation. Azad was not ready at the time for his new exegesis, because while the foundations of his old ideological structure had crumbled, he was not yet ready to evolve the outlines of the new philosophy to take its place. It needed time. It needed developments to crystallise and acquire a mature form and direction. Above all, it required fresh practical and intellectual experiences for new generalisations.

But first the debris had to be removed. This was partly accomplished by developments in connection with the formation of the National Union. That was on 31 July 1926. But Azad had to wait for another year and a half before he could bring himself to undertake a new exegesis of the Quran. He has recollected the circumstances thus:

The year 1927 was nearing its end when all of a sudden my inner self, which for long had been dormant, was moved, and the knots which had restrained action were cut open by the spontaneous urge of the heart.<sup>42</sup>

The crisis was over, at least, for the time being. This cleared the way for his resuming the translation of the Quran and for a qualitatively new commentary. Azad noted:

Every book and every teaching has some central objectives round which move all its details. Unless these central points are grasped nothing from the circle can be understood.

This applied to *Tarjuman al-Quran* also.

#### IV

Three problems constituted the axis of the *Tarjuman's* understanding of the Quran: the concept of Godhead, His attributes; Unity of Religion; and opposition to religious groupings. Out of these evolved a new outlook.

In this new phase of Azad's religious thought system, God's relationship with his creatures is characterised by *rahubiyat* (nourishment), mercy and justice. And these principles are universal. In this wide

universe, provision is made for the nourishment of everything which exists—organic or inorganic. Not only material and physical nourishment is provided for but also spiritual guidance and leadership for all, without distinction Muslims and non-Muslims alike are equal beneficiaries. In Islam's concept of God, there is no place for fear or terror. There is only compassion, mercy or else justice. There is no preference for any group or community, no revenge against any. A person belonging to any group or community would be rewarded for virtuous action and punished for evil deeds. Consequently, even salvation would not require one to become a Muslim. Azad observed:

12 // The essence of religion given by God was to open the path of faith and piety for man. It was to proclaim God's law that as in the case of everything else in the world, so also man's thought and action had their specific attributes and consequences. Virtuous thought and action led to virtuous results; evil thought and deed to evil results. But people forgot this reality. They transformed religion into groupings of races, nations and countries with all kinds of customs and practices. The result is that now the path of man's salvation is not considered to be paved by his belief and action. Every thing is now dependent on who belongs to which group and faction. Each group believes the truth of religion to be its monopoly, and the rest of mankind is supposed to be deprived of it. Consequently, the followers of each religion preach hatred and prejudice against every other religion. And the path of faith and piety has become the path solely of enmity and hatred. . . massacre and bloodshed.

The purpose of religion was to inculcate faith in God and lead to virtuous life. It was not meant to be confined to any particular grouping of man. Any human being. . . having genuine faith in God, and performing good deeds is a follower of *Deen-e-Ilahi* (divine religion) and merits salvation.<sup>40</sup>

This concept of God yielded important results for the practical life of men. One of these was the principle of the Unity of Religions. The *Shariat* or Law of various peoples may be different but the religion of all was the same. Just as success in this worldly world demanded the correct method of work, so also salvation in the world hereafter required virtuous deeds. To be a Muslim was not laid down as a

necessary condition for achieving salvation.

This was a genuine message for secularism. It was of particular importance, especially when religion-based communalism was leading the country towards partition. Objectively, the principles enunciated by Azad aimed at abolishing the distinctions of religion and community in order to consolidate the entire Indian people into one nation.

Thus the *Tarjuman al-Quran* was certainly the great moment of triumph for Azad. It will be hard to find anything comparable in the whole vast literature of Quranic exegesis through the ages—comparable in its universal humanism, in the spiritual heights attained in its concept of God as The merciful nourisher of all that exists, and finally, in projecting Islam—as indeed all religions—as essentially one great message of peace and human brotherhood, cutting across religious groupings and social identities based on religion.

This interpretation invited the wrath of friends, who condemned it as rank heresy. In defence, Azad referred to Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Jamaluddin Afghani and Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, who held that belief in the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam was not a necessary condition for achieving salvation.<sup>41</sup> But the opposition did not subside. Ultimately, Azad had to close the door of salvation on non-Muslims. He challenged one of his critics to show 'where does the *Tarjuman al-Quran* say that. . . belief in the Prophet (Mohammad) is not the necessary condition for salvation?'.<sup>42</sup>

Azad was thus forced to retrace his steps. This was a serious setback. Gone was the urge to reinterpret the Quran, to revise and reverse his earlier preachings of the *Al-Hilal* days, and to give a new message of human brotherhood to his community. Azad made the plea that the first volume of the *Tarjuman* was not the proper place to discuss the question of salvation and of faith in the Prophet of Islam. These would be discussed, he promised, in their proper context in the third volume.

But the *Tarjuman* remained incomplete. The third volume was not published, even though there is definite evidence (mostly in his correspondence) to show that the translation and commentary had been completed. Part of it was even calligraphed, though Azad denied that this was so. The manuscript and the calligraphed pages were called back from the calligraphist and the latter's claim about the work done was ascribed by Azad to his (the calligraphist's) day-dreaming.<sup>43</sup>

The reason for Azad's behaviour should not be difficult to understand. For obvious reasons, he wanted to suppress the volume. Moreover, he was not inclined to undertake the work afresh, even when he had

ample time in the Ahmednagar jail and outside. The controversies dried up the springs of inspiration in him, leaving some of his friends and admirers bewildered and confused. Mohammad Sarwar, the biographer and interpreter of Ubaidullah Sindhi and a staunch critic of Maudoodi and his Jamaat-e-Islami, bemoaned that what Azad preached through *Al-Hilal* and his Khilafat writings had strengthened the ideology of the Jamaat, and that he failed to complete his new translation and commentary to build a cogent alternative system.<sup>44</sup>

That was Azad's tragedy. He had outgrown and rejected his *Al-Hilal* and pan-Islamist past. But the arrow of that past had already been shot from the bow to reach its target. That past continued to inspire and provide the ideological base to the Jamaat-e-Islami as well other obscurantist and separatist Muslim groups.

Jawaharlal Nehru, who had the opportunity of studying Azad as a jail-mate in the Ahmednagar fort, noted that something was amiss with the creative genius of the Maulana. He wrote:

There is something big in him—both as a scholar and as a man of action. Still there is something lacking which prevents him from bearing rich fruits as he should. Fine thinker and magnificent writer as he is, with vast stores of information at his disposal, he should have turned out a host of splendid books. Yet his record is a very limited one. As a man of action also his record would have been a far more dominating one but for that lack of something. . . I do not quite know what.

Compared to him, how small most other prominent men look. Jinnah, who has made good in his own way, is just an uncultured, untaught politician, with a politician's flair and instinct, and nothing more.<sup>45</sup>

Azad's tragedy was not that of an individual; it engulfed the entire tribe of nationalist Muslims. Ansari was no more. But we are already familiar with the plight to which he and Syed Mahmud had been reduced to by the time of the second civil disobedience movement in 1930. Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali were there in the Ahmednagar fort with other national leaders. Of them, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

What Mahmud said hurt and angered me suddenly. . . We differed so radically in regard to basic political questions and indeed our whole outlook in life. . .

It is amazing how weak and flabby Mahmud is. (As for Asaf Ali he has completely gone to pieces.) A curious irony of fate to put us all together on the Working Committee.<sup>46</sup>

Nehru had his fingers on the pulse but could not trace the malady. Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali were among the foremost leaders of the national movement and had undergone all kinds of sufferings in the cause, including the ire of their co-religionists. Did they all, in the end, fall a victim to their personal weaknesses? Personal failings alone do not provide an explanation. Nehru failed to realise that the crisis and tragedy of the nationalist Muslim leaders, including Abul Kalam Azad, was not confined to certain individuals. It extended to the nationalist movement which was, from the beginning, conceived as a federation of religious communities. Political mobilization was thus conducted in the name of religion in order to rouse the masses against the colonial power. But in a country like India this was the surest way of sowing the seeds of religious chauvinism and separatism. Among Muslims this was done by the *Al-Hilal* of Azad. It is engraved in his famous exhortation to the Muslims: 'Remember that the struggle for freedom is a patriotic duty for the Hindus. For us Muslims, it is a duty enjoined by our religion'.<sup>47</sup> When Azad heard of Gandhi appealing to the people in the name of religion to join the freedom movement (as a means, for instance, of protecting the cow), he is reported to have commented that his was a task already accomplished by him.<sup>48</sup> But when the Khilafat and Non-Co-operation movements of the 1920s ended in a fiasco at the altar of non-violence (aftermath of Chauri Chaura), on the one hand, and the demise of Khilafat, on the other, religion brought other tasks to the fore: *Shuddhi*, *Sangathan*, and *Tanzim*. The *Tanzim* movement was led by a prominent nationalist Muslim, Saifuddin Kitchlew, of the Anti-Rowlatt Act fame. Federative unity of religious communities gave way not to national unity but to communal strife and riots. And later to the Partition of the country.

It needs to be pointed out that Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the only nationalist Muslim who opposed the Khilafat movement on the ground that religion should not be allowed to determine the politics of the country. But he was soon isolated from the main political currents of the day. In frustration, he settled in England as a legal practitioner. He returned to India to become the communal leader of a religious community and decided to use religion as a political weapon. He used it with a vengeance.



Gandhi was killed by a Hindu religious chauvinist. For Azad, the system of religious thought, assiduously built in the *Al-Hilal*, in *Tazkira*, and in his writings and speeches on Khilafat, boomeranged. Jinnah, too, found the weapon of religion turn into a noose round his liberal convictions, presenting the figure of a lonely old man, lying helplessly on a roadside in Karachi before being taken to his residence to die.

Azad outlived the other two to serve independent India. But the fact is that he too died a sad man.

## NOTES

- 1 *Lisan al-Sidq* (a journal edited by Azad) January 1904.
- 2 Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, *Zikr-e-Azad: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad ki Rifaqat men Artis Saal* (Calcutta: Daftar 'Azad Hind', 1960).
- 3 M.A. Jinnah in Pakistan's Constituent Assembly on 11 August, 1947: '... You may belong to any religion or caste or creed-that has nothing to do with the business of the state. . . We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state. . . . Now I think you should keep that in front of us as our ideal, and you will find in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual but in the political sense as citizens of the state.' Quoted in Mohammad Munir, *Pakistan From Jinnah to Zia* (Reprint, Document Press: New Delhi), p.53.
- 4 Abul Kalam Azad, *Masala-e Khilafat wa Jazirat al-Arab* (Delhi: Hali Publishing House, 1961), p. 204.
- 5 Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman al-Quran*, ed. Malik Ram (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1980), Introduction, vol. I, p.54.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.36.
- 9 Abul Aala Maudoodi, *Tafhimat al-Quran*, vol. I, Introduction, p.38.
- 10 Shibli Nomani, *Maqalaat-e Shibli* (Azamgarh, 1939), vol. 5, pp. 5-6.
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
- 12 Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tahreeer fi Usul al-Tafseer* (Note on the principles of exegesis being the Introduction to his *Tafseer al-Quran*), p. 19.
- 13 *Ibid.*, *Tahzeeb al-Akhlaq*, vol. I, no. 1.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Mazameen-e Abul Kalam Azad*, ed., Maulvi Mushtaq Ahmad (Delhi: Jalil Press, n.d.), vol. 2,
- 16 *Tarjuman al-Quran*, vol. I, p. 11.
- 17 *Ibid.*; *Al-Hilal*, 8 September, 1912.
- 18 *Ibid.*

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.; *Khutbat-e Azad*, ed., Malik Ram (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1974), p. 29.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Hafeez Malik, quoted in I.H. Douglas, p.149 f.n.
- 25 *Khutbat*, op.cit., p. 131. All subsequent references, unless otherwise stated, are drawn from the *Khutbat-e Azad*.
- 26 *Khutbat*, op.cit., p.136.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Zia-al-Hasan Faruqi, former editor of *Islam and the Modern Age*, in a conversation with the present writer; Francis Robinson, Gail Minault and V.N. Datta have also equated *Imarat-e-Sharia* with Islamic courts. Azad has explicitly rejected this view.
- 29 *Khutbat*, op.cit., p. 132.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 130-131.
- 31 Ibid.; *Masala-e Khilafat*, p. 296.
- 32 *Lisan al-Sidq*, January, 1904, mentioned in V.N. Datta, *Maulana Azad* (Delhi: Manohar, 1990), p. 47. In referring to Azad's age at the time he was editing *Lisan* to be 15-16 years, Datta had uncritically accepted the commonly held view repeated *ad nauseum* in a mood of euphoria. This is a myth helped by Azad's youthful appearance. Maulvi Abu Sayeed Bazmi, a former editor of the famous Urdu nationalist bi-weekly of Bijnor, the *Madina*, and two of Azad's early teachers, Maulvi Nazirul Hasan and Maulvi Mohammad Ibrahim, have placed Azad's date of birth not in 1888 as commonly propagated but in 1879. According to the Islamic Hijri calendar, that will be ten years earlier. See also Rasheeduddin Khan (ed.), *Abul Kalam Azad: Ek Hamageer Shakhshiyat* (Delhi, 1989), p. 20.
- 33 Datta, op.cit.
- 34 *Masala-e Khilafat*, p. 183.
- 35 *Masala-e Khilafat*, p. 266.
- 36 Ibid.; *Khutbat*, op.cit., p. 58.
- 37 These articles by Azad were serialised in *Zamindar* of Lahore, in seven issues in May-June, 1924, and collected by Ghulam Rasul Mehr in *Tabarrukaat-e Azad* (Delhi: Adabi Duniya, 1963), pp. 173-216. Datta's exposition of the essence of Azad's concept of Khilafat, as presented in these articles, is based on a misunderstanding.
- 38 *Hamdard*, 6 October 1926.
- 39 Abul Kalam Azad; 'If today an angel descends from heaven and announces from the heights of the Qutub Minar that Swaraj can be obtained in 24 hours provided India abandons (the programme for) Hindu Muslim unity, I shall give up (the demand for) Swaraj but not unity. For if Swaraj is delayed India would suffer but if our unity is destroyed, this would be a loss to humanity.' (Special

Session of the Indian National Congress, Delhi, December 1923). *Khutbaat*, op.cit., p. 205.

40 *Tarjuman al-Quran*, vol. I, Introduction, p. 24. All subsequent references are drawn from the same source.

41 Ibid.; *Tabarrukat-e-Azad*, p. 29.

42 Ibid.

43 For details, see Malikzada Manzoor Ahmad, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Fikr-o-Fa'wān* (Lucknow: Nasim Book Depot, 1969, reprint, 1978), pp. 309-13.

44 Mohammed Sarwar, *Maulana Maudoodi ki Tahreek-e Islami* (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy), especially the chapter on Abul Kalam Azad.

45 S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1980), vol. 13, pp. 38-9.

46 Ibid., p. 115.

47 Abul Kalam Azad, *Al Jihad fil Hurriyat* (Jihad in the cause of freedom); *Al-Hilal*, December 1912.

48 Ibid., *Qaul-e-Faisal* (Statement before the trying Magistrate) (Calcutta: al-Balagh Press, 1922).

## **Azad's Careers: Roads Taken and not Taken**

**Aijaz Ahmad**

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was undoubtedly one of the seminal figures in the Indian national movement, and he came to occupy, after Ansari's death in 1936, an unassailable position among the nationalist Muslims as they were represented in the Indian National Congress.<sup>1</sup> His Presidential Address at the Ramgarh session of the Congress in March 1940, merely a few days before Jinnah was to unveil the historic Pakistan Resolution at the Lahore session of the Muslim League, is one of the noblest statements of Indian secular nationalism and a definitive refutation of the so-called 'two-nation theory'.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, his attempt at re-interpreting Islamic theology itself in such a way as to make it compatible with the religiously composite, politically secular trajectory of India, which found its most extended statement in the unfinished *Tarjuman al-Quran* in the 1930s, represents a distinctive contribution to Indian Islamic thought. If we take as axiomatic the assertion of the late Dr. Fazlur Rahman, the eminent Pakistani scholar of Islam, that post-medieval Islam has had neither an *Ilm al-Kalaam* ('Theology' in the Christian sense) nor a *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence),<sup>3</sup> we might say that *Tarjuman* is indeed one of the more notable efforts on the part of Indian theologians to fill that vacuum, at least on the level of general principles. And, surely, *Ghubar-e-Khatir* (1946) is one of the enduring books of Urdu

literary prose. Azad himself seems to have become somewhat bitter in his later life for not being allowed to remain President of the Congress after 1946, hence missing the opportunity to play a pivotal role in the politics immediately preceding Partition or to become the first Prime Minister of Independent India. Whether or not that was a realistic possibility is questionable, but he had by then doubtless come to command within the Congress, and in the national movement generally, that kind of stature.

Azad's achievements are myriad. I have highlighted the particular ones in the above paragraph for three reasons. First, it is with his *writings* that I am here the most concerned. Second, I want to specify the three areas of his work which I shall like to discuss here, separately but also in tandem with each other, because it is in the *overlap* of these areas that the breadth of his engagements truly lies: his political trajectory as it is reflected in his writings, his ways of connecting Islam with politics, and his status as a writer of Urdu prose. Third, as even a glance at the above paragraph would indicate, I believe that Azad's essential achievements as writer and scholar came only in the latter part of his life and they came only after he had either abandoned or greatly modified the positions that had governed his thought and actions up to and into the Khilafat movement. In this last emphasis, my views seem to run counter to the main trends of the Azad scholarship as it has developed since his death in 1958, both in India and in Pakistan.

Contrary to general impressions in India, where it is presumed that Azad would be neglected in Pakistan because of his commitment to secular Indian nationalism, he is in fact an extremely popular author there and collections of his writings are promoted a great deal, mainly by the conservative, fundamentalist groupings who concentrate on what I would call the *Al-Hilal* decade of Azad's life<sup>4</sup> and many of whom take Azad to have been—before his 'Gandhian error'—the precursor of the kind of Islamic politics which came to be represented in Pakistan by men like Abul Aala Maudoodi and organisations like the Jamaat-e Islami.<sup>5</sup> More enlightened Pakistani scholars, such as Qazi Javed,<sup>6</sup> counter this predominant tendency, then, by essentially eliding the question of his later anti-Pakistan politics, and emphasising his anti-colonial activities during that same *Al-Hilal* decade; this alternative narrative basically ends with affirmative descriptions of the concept of *Umma-Wahida*,<sup>7</sup> which Azad resurrected in 1920. The uncanny convergence between these contrasting strands of Pakistani representations of Azad resides in the fact that both emphasise that same decade

as the period of his true achievement and both tend to ignore his later life, except for cursory reference to *Tarjuman* and his epistolary work.<sup>8</sup>

In the mainstream scholarship in India, there is of course no inhibition about recognising the seminal importance of Azad's later career, of the kind that exists in most Pakistani scholarship, and the precariousness of Azad's early growth, bordering on genius, is also justifiably and readily recognised. But, then, the insights gained in maturity are read back into the youth, so that one has the impression of a seamless growth, unproblematic and always fully enlightened and secular, from the start.<sup>9</sup> The procedure, from which only a few depart,<sup>10</sup> is to see Azad as a man not only of exceptional talent and intelligence but also always in full possession of himself: commanding great reservoirs of knowledge since childhood; a mature writer by the age of fifteen (when he establishes *Lisan al-Sidq*, in 1903); already in possession of a religiously pluralistic anti-colonial ideology by the age of twenty-four (when he starts publishing *Al-Hilal*, in 1912); launched already, as he came out of Ranchi prison in 1919, on the trajectory that would take him inevitably to the apex of the national movement; always teaching others, but himself a perfect autodidact, in literature as well as politics, right into his 30s and beyond. It is this image of perfect, linear growth which I find worthy of examination.

## I

As one tries to think of the *whole* of Azad's career—or, rather, his many careers—one has the sense not of a continuity, nor even of a contrast between the young and the mature man, but of unceasing shifts, of a heart riven by contrary desires and a mind tempted by irreconcilable convictions; not only of a life constantly re-making itself after every few years but also of a *voice*, in his writings, which constantly changes its own timber and texture, while also continually shifting facts and emphases in the process of recounting what the life has been in the past, always superimposing upon that past a continuity it never had.

These shifts begin early. Azad was fond of recounting in later life how he was born in Mecca and how Arabic was his mother-tongue. By 1899, when he was presumably eleven years old, he was publishing his own Urdu *ghazals* which were characteristic of what was then in vogue, at the turn of the century, following the manner of Dagh and Ameer Minai, profane and romantic and somewhat decadent in image and sentiment, but in tone and vocabulary remarkably fluent for someone who is said—by Malik Ram among others—to have not known the

language only a couple of years earlier. By 1903, when he established his first full-scale journal, *Lisan al-Sidq*, he was writing a prose somewhat like Altaf Husain Hali in its Islamic revivalist nostalgia, somewhat like Syed Ahmad Khan in its modernising and reformist aspiration, but, like Hali and Sir Syed, he too was then modelling the written sentence on educated daily speech. Over the next three years he grew personally close to Shibli Nomani and his prose took on tonalities indistinguishable from those of the master of Nadwat al-ulama. By 1910, he had written his first masterpiece, entirely free of those successive influences, finding his own distinctive voice for the first time, closer to the spirit of his early *ghazals* but infinitely superior in the truth of its passions on the one hand, and revealing, on the other, his increasing penchant for a style at once oracular and digressive: the essay *Hayat-e-Sarmad Shaheed*, on the life of the Sufi who was a companion of Dara Shikoh and was similarly beheaded by Aurangzeb. What the essay celebrates, in a prose passionately eloquent despite its repeated rhetorical departures from the spoken vernacular, are the transgressions of forbidden sexual desire, the heretic grandeur of sufic ecstasy, and the courage to defy powers at once puritanical and monarchic.<sup>11</sup>

But that first masterpiece also heralded the end of a phase, and Azad was never to permit himself to write anything resembling that essay, or let the public gaze fall on that aspect of his sensibility, for the next thirty-five years—until the appearance of that last magnificent epistle in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, on his love of classical music, which too he included not in the first two editions but only in the third, issued in February 1947. Instead, we have, starting in 1912, the *Al-Hilal* phase which was in its emphases on piety and *fiqh* diametrically the opposite of what he had upheld less than two years earlier. By 1915, he was announcing the imminent publication of a magisterial, multi-volume work of Quranic translation, exegesis and commentary, claiming confidently that he would take this scholarship beyond the point where Shah Waliullah had left it in the eighteenth century, because, as the announcement in *Al-Balagh* put it, 'God had reserved this task for the editor of *Al-Hilal*'.<sup>12</sup> In reality, of course, no such work ever appeared. But *Tazkira*, which Azad drafted in 1916 and was published in 1919, had the predominant purpose of associating Azad's entire family over many generations, hence by implication Azad himself, with precisely that tradition of pietistic *Shariat*, descended from Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, to which Sarmad had been opposed and which had therefore

taken his life.<sup>13</sup> By the time the Khilafat movement reached its highest crescendo, Azad had identified himself with the move to have him appointed by formal consent of the Indian *ulama* as *Imam al-Hind*—a Chief theologian for India, an institution Indian Islam had strictly never had—so as to supervise, among other things, a network of *shariat* courts throughout the country.<sup>14</sup> This hope was finally dashed by the time Jamiat al-*ulama-i Hind* met in its session of November 1921, eleven years after the publication of the Sarmad essay, bringing to a close what we have called the '*Al-Hilal* decade' of Azad's life. He was arrested the next month and soon thereafter delivered his famous prison oration, *Qaul-e-Faisal*, which launched him firmly on the path of Congress nationalism, as was indicated by his election as President of Congress for the Special Session that was held soon after he came out of prison, in 1923.

One might think that there would be a direct line of development to trace after that date. But there isn't. Azad tried to return to journalism and undertook several ventures in that direction,<sup>15</sup> including the attempt to revive *Al-Hilal*, so that twenty-five issues of the revived journal were in fact published between June and December 1927. He remained active in Congress politics but it was a time of relative ebb in national politics, despite the communal frenzy of the late twenties, the commotion surrounding the Nehru Report, and Gandhi's two major attempts at satyagraha in the early thirties; Azad was in any case overshadowed by Ansari who was less flamboyant but senior and more sagacious. The two extant volumes of the *Tarjuman* were also prepared and published in the course of these years, in 1930 and 1936 respectively. During these years, then, one might say, Azad was yet again trying to assert his status as a key Islamic theologian and was still pursuing, in whatever contradictory and half-hearted fashion, the goal he had set for himself in the 1910s: that of becoming a new *mujaddid* ('Renovator') for the world of Islam. What was remarkable about this renewed attempt was the alacrity with which it was given up when the opportunity arose, especially after Ansari's withdrew from politics in 1935 and then died the following year, for Azad to return to centre stage in national politics, as election campaigns got launched in the aftermath of the 1935 Act. Over the next twenty-two years, and even when he had plenty of leisure during his imprisonment in Ahmednagar Fort in the early 1940s, he neither returned to the *Tarjuman* nor wrote anything else of that kind.<sup>16</sup> The Ramgarh Address of 1940 then defined the new creed, which was notable thereafter for lack of Islamic juristic reference. The prose of



*Ghubar-e-Khatir* – a prose of profane pleasure and secular civility, one might say – stands in sharp contrast not only to the apocalyptic prose of the *Al-Hilal* decade but to *Tarjuman's* own theological preoccupation as well. By the time he came to dictate the notes from which Humayun Kabir then carved *India Wins Freedom*, he could say things diametrically opposed to what he had written in his *Al-Hilal* days while claiming all the while that he had held the same beliefs since 1912. On the last page of the main narrative, for example, we find the following:

It is one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally different. It is true that Islam sought to establish a society which transcends racial, linguistic, economic and political frontiers. History has however proved that after the first few decades or at most after the first century, Islam was not able to unite all the Muslim countries on the basis of Islam alone.<sup>17</sup>

History, in other words, had superseded the original Islamic design, and one had to accept history's verdict: nations had their basis in profane facts, not in religious belief. The truth of the statement is of course undeniable, but it is also indicative of the road Azad had travelled since the days when he used to declare that Constantinople was the 'political centre' (*siyasi markaz*) of 'Islam's universal nationhood' (*Alamgir Islami qaumiat*) !

One might also note here that it was *after* he had abandoned the *Tarjuman* – he didn't say so, but he had in effect abandoned it after 1936 – that he adopted a fully secular politics. The mode of thought that runs from the Ramgarh Address to *India Wins Freedom* is radically opposed to not only the pan-Islamism of the *Al-Hilal* period but also to the mode of the philosophical thought of the *Tarjuman* itself, in the sense that the search for a religious form of legitimation is now, after 1940, abandoned altogether and political principle is derived exclusively from the specificity of India's own distinctive social history and from the requirements of secular nationhood, making it compatible with socialistic re-distribution of wealth, non-*shariatic* civil law, and universal adult franchise. The Ramgarh Address in fact describes the thousand-year history of India up to the twentieth century as a *symbiosis* whereby Hindus and Muslims have become more

*alike*; the practitioners of both religions, he says, now resemble each other much more than they resemble the Hindus and Muslims of the centuries past. In a remarkable aside, he says that the principle of conservation is necessary for religious and moral values, suicidal for social and political processes. In the light of all this, then, he pointedly says that Muslims of India need what everyone else needs: secular democracy, progressive economy, decentralised administration and a genuinely federalist constitution. Except for its emphasis on decentralisation, this position is indistinguishable from the Nehruvian positions.<sup>18</sup>

## II

There are, thus, constant shifts throughout Azad's career. Nor are these shifts reducible to the familiar demarcations between early and late writings, or between youthful and mature patterns of thought. What one encounters, in fact, are two quite different kind of processes. One is the evident preconsciousness of his early life, which indicates a certain kind of early maturation. It is true that the *ghazals* he wrote at the age of eleven and twelve were as well-polished as anyone else would write, with luck, at thirty, so that his claim that he and his brother were already being treated in the Calcutta *mushairas* of that time as *senior* poets is somewhat credible. Sarojini Naidu's famous quip – that Maulana Azad was fifty years old at birth – referred mainly to the gravity of manner which Azad had assumed at an early age and which amused her and Jawaharlal a great deal, but it also referred to that same precociousness. The other process we find is not one of growth, in the sense of refining or deepening existing patterns and insights, but of outright repudiation. Of these many repudiations Azad himself underscored only two, and both from early life: his move out of his family's orthodoxy, and his later repudiation of the so-called 'Aligarh tendency'. For the rest, he claimed a straight line of belief and action from the founding of *Al-Hilal* to the political premises of *India Wins Freedom*. Both these claims would bear some examination. Given his highly pietistic positions during the *Al-Hilal* phase, especially in *Al-Balagh*, and given also the enormous pride with which he narrates the history of his family's orthodox traditions in *Tazkira*, his own assertion that he had irrevocably broken away from that orthodox tradition by the age of fifteen, appears questionable.<sup>19</sup> One might say, rather, that the decade signifies his return, precisely, to those very traditions and that what he now wanted was to become not merely a *pir* of a limited and scattered community of *murids*, as his father had been, but an *Imam*

for all of India: a grand *pir*, so to speak. And, of course, the line between 1912 and 1958 was anything but straight, as we shall see in more detail presently.

We cannot, however, simply say that Azad changed his position every few years and leave it at that. A broader periodisation of his life is indeed possible, and the task really is to identify stresses and turns within each broad period. In this more flexible perspective, it is possible to say, though only schematically and for analytic purpose alone, that the essential trajectory of Azad's life was basically divided into two periods: that the transition from the one to the other is located in the Khilafat period and is bracketed, on the one hand, by his crucial decision to throw in his lot decisively with Gandhi and, on the other, by the equally decisive failure of his attempt to be accepted by the Indian *ulama* as *Imam al-Hind*; and that the document of this transition, if one need be identified, is his brilliant oration in prison, at the time of his sentencing in February 1922, entitled *Qaul-e-Faisal*. Up until 1920 Azad had projected himself as a leader of Muslims almost exclusively, and it was in that capacity that he participated in the larger national movement. It was the convergence of Khilafat with Non-Co-operation on the grassroots, mass level – combined with his failure to obtain an unchallengeable theological pre-eminence among the Islamic *ulama*, his personal convergence with Gandhi, and his rapid promotion to the very apex of the Congress – which brought about a sea-change in Azad, who continued to represent Muslims in Congress but who now became a leader of the national movement as such. There is nothing natural about this entirely new direction of his career after 1922-23, nor can it possibly be read back from *Al-Hilal*. In reality, this monumental shift changed everything, including his theology and his prose style. Much from his earlier life, including some of its insecurities and self-preoccupations, he took into the second phase – which begins firmly with his election as President of the Special session of the Congress in 1923 and the crisis of his pan-Islamicist intellectual formation that he had to face fully with the Kemalist abolition of the Osmanli Khilafat in March 1924 – but he also discarded a very great deal.

'Style', Whitehead once said, 'is the morality of one's mind'. The contrast between the two phases of Azad's life is obvious in the great shift that takes place in his prose. *Tazkira* (1919), the crowning classic of the earlier phase, which purports to be a biographical account of his ancestors and includes an uninformative appendix on his own youth that sits uncomfortably with the rest, is written in a style so digressive and forbidding, so full of circumlocution and turgid Arabisms and plain

pretense, that no one could possibly want to read it, except, as in my case, for research interest. *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, the epistolary masterpiece of the latter phase, is written, by contrast, in a prose so well inflected and nuanced that few literate readers of Urdu would find it possible to put it down; in its own way, despite its dogged fictionality and extensive artifice, this is probably the one thing we have in the language that reminds one of Ghalib's letters—which is high praise, in deed. Schematically speaking, we might say that changes in Azad's prose style mirror, at every stage, his shifting relationships with that complex tradition which we associate with the figure of Syed Ahmad Khan. The complexity of that tradition and Azad's relationship with it shall be examined in a later section of this text. Suffice it to say here that Sir Syed had drawn upon the three traditions of Urdu prose represented, respectively, by the vernacularization of secular prose by the writers and scribes of Fort William College, the simplification of religious prose by Shah Abdul Aziz, and the modernization of tone and cadence that we find in Ghalib's epistolary prose; combining these influences with what he learned from the English traditions of the 'essay', as he found it in such writers as Addison, Steele and Lamb, Sir Syed gave to Urdu its first major *oeuvre* of a rationalist prose designed for printed communication among large sections of the literate population. Azad's own prose before the *Al-Hilal* decade was modelled precisely on this tradition, which he then repudiated during his pan-Islamist phase and to which he gradually returned as his commitment to secular nationalism became stronger, expressed fully in public documents such as the Ramgarh Address and the superb literary prose of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*.

The same contrast is there in the structure of Azad's religious sentiment in the two phases. His Islam of the 1910s is for the most part furious, apocalyptic, unforgiving, and in the strict sense fundamentalist.<sup>20</sup> That God's wrath is soon to wipe off the reign of the *kuffar* is a major theme of Azad's essays in *Al-Balagh*, the short-lived but equally legendary journal which he founded after the banning of *Al-Hilal*. It is symptomatic that Azad insistently uses the word *kuffar* for Europeans in these essays. Plural of the word '*kafir*', the epithet carries such intensities of pietistic indignation that mere 'non-Muslim' cannot convey the meaning; 'infidels' or 'heathens' as used for Hindus and Muslims in Christian missionary hysterics would be closer. I am thus using the word 'fundamentalist' here in a more or less technical sense. It connotes, first, the exclusive emphasis on the canonical text and the assertion that that text is *all* you need for the structuring of life, individually and collectively. The *Quran* is the source of all knowl-

edge', is Azad's constant theme in this whole phase and is reiterated in great many variations. Second, there is, in the fundamentalist, an uncompromising emphasis on one's own religion as the source of all politics. Azad develops this theme copiously throughout this phase so that it is not uncharacteristic of him to say that 'All governments of the world, except *mazhabi* [religious, theocratic] governments, are oppressive in their fundamental make-up'. Third, the fundamentalist asserts the primacy of the most meagre kinds of religious textuality over secular and profane knowledges. Azad's following statement, about the Baghdad of the Abbasid period, is also characteristic in this regard:

Muslims take great pride in the civilization, knowledges, and the arts of Baghdad. But those were mere decorations for the pleasure of the rulers. We deem them worthy of no pride. Rather, a single *hadith* (Tradition) of the Prophet, which Imam Bukhari has collected by travelling a hundred miles, is a thousand times more precious than all those knowledges.

That Abbasid Baghdad would come in for such contempt also fits. It was there, and in that period, that neo-Platonism, which had entered Islamic thought through the Coptic monasteries after the conquest of Egypt, was fully developed into schools of theology, such as that of the Mutazila. Debunking of that magnificent Renaissance, which combined the Egyptian and the Greek strands of thought with the Islamic, is a patent theme of subsequent fundamentalisms.

It should be said in favour of Azad, though, that his essay 'Iraq aur Laila e-Iraq', in the very next issue of *Al-Balagh*, had the merit of starting with the ecstatic and profane love poetry of Qais-e-Amari (the famous 'majnoon') addressed to Laila; in a short but significant paragraph of that essay Azad celebrates those same 'arts and knowledges' which he had debunked the previous month. However, his ability to enunciate such contradictory ideas in successive issues of the same journal points again to his enduring inability to make his choice between the ecstatic tradition of figures like Sarmad and the *Shariatic* tradition descended from Ibn Taimiyya.

The pan-Islamist anti-colonialism of the *Al-Hilal* decade was in any case inconsistent on many counts. The characterisation of all Muslims of the world as a single *qaum* (nation) with a political centre (*siyasi markaz*) located in Istanbul (Constantinople), with a Khalifa of Islam who was also the Sultan, specifically, of Turkey, left the Indian Muslims

in a highly ambiguous situation, which was resolved only rhetorically, in the language of metaphor, but never in terms of rational, analytic discourse. How many *nations* could one belong to, simultaneously, with how many *political centres*? If the *shariat* enjoined that one always be the *subject* of the Khalifa/Sultan of Turkey, what status would one have if India were independent and there were to be a war between the two countries or, in the less dire case, if the Sultan simply forbade one to obey Indian laws? What happens, in that case, to the concentric circles which appeared on the Khilafat stationary, to dissolve in a metaphor the difficulty of belonging to two nations simultaneously, one territorial and Indian, the other religious and trans-continental? It is also indicative that Azad always spoke emphatically of the *exclusive* rights of Muslims in *Jazirat al-Arab*—in which he specifically included Palestine, Syria and Lebanon in addition to Peninsular Arabia—while routinely ignoring the *indigenous* non-Muslim populations of those regions. Did *they* have no rights? What rights *could* they have, considering that Azad had explicitly said that theocratic government was the only just form of government? How does one reconcile minority rights—or even majority *rights*, for that matter—with theocracy? It is doubtless the case, furthermore, that his articles in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* focused on mobilizing Indian Muslims against colonial authority. It is also the case, however, that these same articles have little to say *to*—or even *about*—the non-Muslim population inside India. There was doubtless some vague sense that there should be anti-British co-operation; but there are also statements to the effect that Muslims need to learn nothing, and certainly accept no leadership, from Hindus. So, what happens to this Muslim-Hindu co-operation if the British do actually leave, considering that one stands already for theocratic form of government? Even the idea of *Umma-Wahida* started surfacing in his writings only in 1920 and only as an *oppositional* unity against the British. What was to be the *positive* form of this unity if the British did actually leave, and how were the Muslims—with their belief in theocratic government and their loyalty to the Turkish Khalifa—to live in an independent polity where non-Muslims were in the majority? Even the basis of this idea of *Umma-Wahida* was problematic. The theological justification which was found in the precedent of the Hudaibiya Treaty of A.D. 628, whereby the Prophet of Islam had made his peace with Jews, was certainly useful in inducting the pietistic, pan-Islamicist cadres into a countryside agitation which spread more or less seamlessly from the mosques to the kisan sabhas and from Gandhian non-co-operation to medical aid

to Turkey. With the help of this precedent from early Islamic history Azad 'asserted', as Mushirul Hasan puts it, 'that uniting with one category of non-Muslims, the Hindus, against another category of non-Muslims, the British, was obligatory.'<sup>21</sup> So, a provisional 'unity' was forged, so long as the 'treaty' was in effect. But what happens to this 'treaty' if the common enemy, the British, disappears, considering that Muslims were a minority in India and could not possibly have an *Islamic* theocracy? Azad was to resolve these political problems only much later, around 1940, when he abandoned the search for a pietistic justification for Hindu-Muslim unity and accepted the secular premise.

For the latter period of his religious thought we have, meanwhile, the generous ecumenism of *Tarjuman al-Quran*. In the light of his revisions of some conventional perspectives in this text, it has often been asserted that this reformulation of theological positions in ecumenical directions itself provides the basis for secular politics. That is doubtful, and I think the task of taking the measure of his achievement here requires of us that we do not overstate the case. Azad's project in the *Tarjuman* is strictly that of a modern-day theologian at his limited best, temperate and traditionalist and generous all at once, who seeks a certain kind of modernisation and reformation within the terms of his belief, with the objective that was once stated most succinctly by Shaikh Mohammad Abduh, the Grand Mufti of Egypt under Cromer: 'not to subject Islam to science, but to bring back into Islam those who believe in science.' Had this kind of reformation been undertaken in the sixteenth century, soon after Luther nailed his theses to the chapel-door in Wittenberg, or even in the eighteenth, in direct conflict with Mohammad Abdul Wahhab's pietistic and strident narrowings of the *sharia*, the work would have been truly revolutionary. In the 1930s, one hundred and fifty years after Voltaire and Montesquieu, over a hundred years after the Jan-nissar force (Jannissaries in English) was dispersed to open up the way for *Tanzimat* in Turkey, fifty years after the Egyptian *Nahda*, and generally in the wake of the first wave of Muslim modernism that had enveloped vast regions from Central Asia to North Africa,<sup>22</sup> Azad's work in the *Tarjuman* turned out to be surely very erudite but at best rather tame. It had none of the apocalyptic ferocity of the *Al-Balagh* essays; its engagements were broad and generous; but it was still self-divided between its ecumenism and sufic possibility on the one hand, and, on the other, its final appeal, again and again, to Ibn Taymiyya, the conservative medieval *faqih* of the Hanbalite school of Sunni Islam. What the *Tarjuman* preached, in

political terms then, was not secularism but a combination of personal piety and generous tolerance.

The main contribution of the *Tarjuman* was its concept of *Wahdat-e-Adyaan* ('Unity of all Faiths') which was perfectly compatible with many strands of Sufic thought, including the concept of *Wahdat-al-Wajud*, which was first expounded by Ibn al-Arabi but was then greatly extended and popularised in India by several of the Sufic orders. At a later stage, in the epistles of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, Azad himself was to comment that the Sufic principle of *Wahdat-al-Wajud* was the same as (in his words) 'Upanishadic pantheism'. From this of course one could derive a straightforward non-denominational, composite culture as well as ethics of very broad tolerance and even highly syncretic religious practices. Had Azad remained steadfast on this syncretic principle, and had he found a popular idiom both for this religious innovation and for political style, he might have become for Indian Islam what Gandhi substantially became for Hindu reform movement. Unfortunately, the concept of *Wahdat-e-Adyaan* remained at best an abstract, more or less cerebral concept, and when Azad was challenged by other Islamic theologians he basically retreated into affirmation of the more traditional, pietistic positions based not on Sufic transgressions but on normative *fiqh*. Asked whether *namaz* (the ritual prayer binding on all Muslims) was both necessary and distinctive for a Muslim, as distinguished from non-Muslims, and whether the Quran offered the same salvation for those who accepted the Islamic *kalima* (the liturgical affirmation of the primacy of Allah over other gods, and of the Prophethood of Mohammad) and those who didn't, Azad was forced to give only evasive replies, speaking copiously of *rabubiyat* ('Nurture'?) as Allah's main attribute which applied to all created beings, but never answering the direct question. The concept of *rabubiyat* we shall discuss below, but the larger difficulty was in the text of the *Tarjuman* itself, which had simultaneously invoked the esoteric sufic traditions as well as the literalist and canonical textuality of the *fiqh* tradition—and, further back, in Azad's desire to equally inhabit the ecstatic world of Sarmad (as in the 1910 essay) as well as the punitive, puritanical world of Sirhindi (as in *Taskira*). It must be said, though, that the main thrust of the *Tarjuman* was in the direction of tolerance, magnanimity, ecumenism, and the treatment of religion not as a mandatory and exclusivist ritual but as essentially an inward, aesthetic experience. This was not at all a bad sign in an illiberal political climate; the intensified communal conflicts of the latter 1920s were the immediate backdrop for the composition of the *Tarjuman*, and the subsequent



communal frenzy was to rip the country apart, quite literally. But the age when a liberalist re-interpretation of a religion could transform the lives of nations had passed, and Azad, at once a leader in a mass movement but also an erudite theologian, could not fully acknowledge that progressive transformations of society now presumed not a *better* interpretation of religion but a firm secularity, a *separation* between religion and politics. In the event, *Tarjuman* became, for all its eloquence and magnanimities, a matter of debate only among theologians and some limited sections of the modern Muslim intelligentsia, with no impact on general political life. Despite the limited impact, however, it is also the case that the essentially humanistic and ecumenical thrust of the *Tarjuman* stands in sharp contrast to the stridencies of the *Al-Hilal* decade.

One thinks in this context, oddly, of Gandhi. After all, Gandhi too, for reasons of deeply-felt personal predilections but also because he considered it the most opportune way to stem the tide of Hindu communalism, had opted to be not a secularist, in the Nehruvian sense, but a *Hindu* reformer. Operating within the predicates of caste society, he had upheld the concept of the four *varnas* and yet declared the lowest castes 'the children of god'; it has been argued, by Ambedkar among scores of others, that it was a middle caste solution for the conciliation of the upper and the lower castes. Deeply wounded by the communal conflicts between groups of Hindus and Muslims, he preached tolerance, ecumenism, ahimsa, magnanimity, bridling of greed and competitiveness if not exactly universal brahmacharya; this society of tolerable conditions of life for all and of mutual respect among the adversaries of yesteryears, he called, within the traditionalist lexicon available to him inside Hindu reformism, Ram Rajya.

The burden of Azad's social thought in the *Tarjuman*, when shorn of all theological finesse, is that a civilizational compact of mutuality between Muslims and Hindus of India, and among the various religious denominations generally, is the paramount need both of the nation-state and of a religious life lived in political liberty. For a contemporary secular scholar who has no particular preference for the lexicon either of Islam or of Hinduism, there appear to be uncanny similarities between Gandhi's idea of Ram Rajya and Azad's sense, encapsulated in the twin notions of *rabubiyat* and *Wahdat-e-Adyaan*, of possible compatibility between Islamic humanism and non-sectarian existence, especially as both espouse an ecumenical reformation in their respective religions so as to make those religions compatible with modern needs. The objective in both cases is at once the refurbishing of piety as well as

the creation of a harmonious multi-religious polity which is justifiable in the terms of the religion that each espoused; what joins the two views is the common ground that both wish to occupy, but neither to the exclusion or diminution of the other. There appears to be, in other words, a kind of *ahimsa* between Gandhi's *ahimsa* and Azad's *Wahdat-e-Adyaan*.

Tensions and differences, though, are also obvious enough. One clearly is that the existence of adjacent but distinct world-views, however tolerant of each other, does not constitute secularism, so long as the two world-views are expressed in specific religious lexicons. The lexicons of Islamic theology and of Hindu piety are, after all, constitutively different, and the deployment of these lexicons—not as in Kabir, overlappingly; but as in Azad and Gandhi, who speak culturally and religiously differentiated languages—does create differential effects and sensibilities, despite their shared universalist messages, so that the two religious groups thus addressed become, by virtue of the very lexicon, intensely aware of their differential and mutually exclusive cultural locations. And, if one is seeking for Ram Rajya, what, after all, is there to prevent L. K. Advani from claiming that his rath yatra too was in search of the same?

Another way of encapsulating this same difficulty might be this: the fact that both Gandhi and Azad spoke in the religious idiom created difficulties enough for a secular society to emerge, but that they spoke in two religious idioms, considered by most as mutually incompatible, had the effect of cancelling out each other, as so much *talk*, hardly relevant to the way life among followers of the two religions was to be lived in the aftermath of the Partition. The difficulty, in Azad's case, was compounded by the fact of his immense and always-present erudition in Islamic traditions, and by the level of his language. In this particular respect, the difficulty was not simply that his was the thought growing out of Islam, the religion of a minority, nor only that he spoke and wrote in Urdu, the language of relatively few Indians. That was in fact a minor matter, in the sense that Urdu could always be translated and that certain kinds of 'Islam'—the syncretic kinds, which he affirmed very sparingly and lived not at all—were by no means unfamiliar to great many who were not Muslims themselves. The difficulty, much less so than at earlier stages of his life but still formidable until the end, was that it was the culture of the Muslim *elite*, and of the *traditional elite* at that, which Azad actually abided by in his personal life and public persona, so that it was hardly accessible to the mass of Muslims and

certainly not available to the non-elite bulk of the non-Muslim population. Gandhi's language was so much the language of the mass culture that much of it even the Muslim peasant, often rooted in syncretic cultural overlaps, could fully comprehend; Azad's, on the other hand, was so rooted in the elite traditions that many Muslims and Hindus alike, could admire him, but few – none below the propertied middle class – could actually identify with him.

It is doubtless the case that in some rare moments after the Ramgarh transition Azad did gain a new kind of ability to speak publicly and sympathetically about his love of the transgressive, ecumenical, artistic, even hedonistic traditions in certain kinds of Islam and in the life of Muslims generally, an ability which he had done so much to conceal after the publication of his famous essay on Sarmad in 1910.

Some reference to Gandhi here may again be revealing. For, Gandhi had tried to reconcile in his life the *Bhagwad-Gita* with Gita-Govinda, *Mahabharatha* with Meerabai, and all these with a rhythm of daily life embedded in popular ritual, vernacular existence and threadbare frugality of consumption. Azad was different on most of these counts. (The last place Azad could imagine for himself would be a village, less still an ashram). His own allegiances, at least in public life, had always been divided between *fiqh* and *tasawwuf*, *shariat* and *tariqat*. In the days of *Al-Hilal*, he had wilfully presented himself as a dogged partisan of *shariat* and of the high textuality of Quranic commentaries in the traditions of *Kalaam*. By contrast, his magnificent last letter in *Ghubar-e-Khatir*—on his life-long secret passion for classical music, mainly Indian but also Arabic—entirely overturns the pietistic self-image he had projected in that earlier phase and testifies to his longing for profane pleasures. It is significant, though, that it remained a lonely passion, never lived publicly; he concealed it from the world in adult life, as he had concealed it from his father when he was a boy. By the time he came to write *Ghubar-e-Khatir* he had changed sufficiently—and it was, in the terms of Azad's life, an enormous change—to speak of such things in print, at least once or twice; but beyond that he never could go. The difficulty, again, was that the gap between his private love of sufic doctrine and profane music, and the public persona of theologian and jurist, had been too great; Azad could not bridge that gap in later life, even if he wanted to, without ruining his own political career, and perhaps even inner balance. Syncretic traditions of the common Muslim were there for him to contemplate, in some secret ways even to envy, as is obvious from his loving account of the way

Hindu devotional music had enveloped the lives of countless Muslims, but the public persona never made room for unconventional, transgressive conduct, because there always was that dominant aspect of the self which remembered with pride, or at least imagined with much passion, that it was descended from a lineage of theologians which had once upheld the pietistic traditions in the halls of Emperor Jahangir's hedonistic court. Gandhi, of course, had no such claims and inhibitions.

It may be useful here to press a bit further the question of Azad's religious ecumenism—its directions and its limits—especially with reference to the twin concepts of *rahubiyyat* and *Wahdat-e-Adyaan* which he evolved in his maturer years.

The concept of *rahubiyyat* as Allah's main attribute is one of Azad's key innovation in the *Tarjuman*, but—and perhaps precisely because it is such a key term—the word is strictly untranslatable. Azad gives a very erudite account of Arabic etymologies, but the problem of translation is a conceptual one. Christian concepts of 'Love' or 'Mercy' or 'Beneficence' do not come even close, but reference to the Hindu Trinity of Creator-Preserver-Destroyer might help. Simply put, traditional Islamic theology has as a rule emphasised the attributes of Allah as 'Creator', whereas Azad shifts the emphasis towards 'Preserver', the provider and protector of the conditions of life for the created order, hence the predominant meaning of *Nurture* in the concept. In terms of Hindu cosmology, in other words, the shift is in the Vaishnavite direction. This shift becomes all the more interesting when we see that in some of his rhetorical flourishes in the latter part of his life, Azad did attempt a Kabir-like dissolution of differential Hindu and Muslim categories.

I have referred already to his assertion in one of his epistles that the sufic doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wajud* was the same as 'Upanishadic pantheism'. In that same epistle, he also says that of all the religions of the world Hinduism has achieved the most refined concept of monotheism, before the castist degeneration; a statement of that kind becomes plausible only if one is thinking of advaita. So, it is not surprising that in his speech at Vishva Bharati, in Shantiniketan, on 22 September 1951, Azad also declared that the term *advaita* 'translated into Arabic. . . would read as *Wahdah la shareek*'. The central doctrine of Kabir-bhakti is thus made identical with the central doctrine of Islamic piety. Eclectic but sweeping statements of this kind indicate a desire to effect a philosophical reconciliation between Islam and Hinduism. Four aspects of this attempt are, however, notable. One, the reconciliation is attempted not on the level of popular syncretic traditions but on the level of High

textuality and philosophical abstraction—between the Upanishad and *Ibn al-Kalaam*, so to speak. Second, it is Hinduism that is selectively incorporated within Islam through the process of establishing complementarity and even identity between some discrete concepts of the two, while the whole surrounding edifice remains Islamic. Third, no *praxis* or community follows from the conceptual revision: no *panth*, no *tariqa*, no *math*, no *zawiya*, no ashram—only the aesthetic beauty of reconciliation-in-contemplation. Fourth, there is never any direct statement of the intent; it is only from a collection of discrete statements that the intent may be inferred. Formally, Azad remains a strict *Islamic* theologian—though unsatisfactory to most of the theological elite, whom he primarily addresses, precisely because of his ecumenism. The whole project remains peculiarly disembodied, precariously dislocated. No wonder that it was simply abandoned.

### III

I have suggested already that, regardless of all the fame that came to him early in life, the most substantial part of Azad's achievement came only in the maturer years. It is useful to summarise, however, what Azad had to leave behind before he gained the certainties of later life, for, it is only by grasping the magnitude of what he left behind that we can fully grasp the quality of later achievement.

Uncertainty appears to be the hallmark both of Azad's own personality in the early years of his life as well as of the documentary evidence pertaining to those years. A large part of the difficulty is that we simply do not have any independent accounts; such as we have always refer back to what Azad himself said or is claimed to have said. One of the few direct accounts came from Azad's older sister, Fatima Begum, in a interview that was broadcast from All-India Radio, Delhi, on 22 February, 1959, and then printed in the Urdu journal, *Aaj Kal*, in the September issue of the same year. The document is invaluable, both because it is so rare that we get an account of Azad's early life from any source other than himself as well as (even more significantly) about the insight it provides into the self-image he seems to have carved for himself as a child and cultivated carefully all his life. The following extract from that text, for example, speaks volumes:

As a child Azad was never fond of the games children usually indulge in. Even at the age of eight, his games were unique. Sometimes, he would line up trunks and boxes and pronounce

them to be a train. Then he would tie one of father's turbans round his head and taking his seat on one of the boxes, he would ask us, his sisters, to shout and cry 'Give way, give way, the Maulana from Delhi is on his way.' When we said, 'Brother, there is no crowd here; whom should we push aside or ask to get out of the way, he would remonstrate: 'Can't you follow this simple make-belief? Can't you visualise that a large crowd has come to receive me?'. Then he would get down from the box and walk off slowly and deliberately, like an elderly person. Sometimes he would climb a raised platform and ask his sisters to surround him and applaud him, imagining that he was speaking amidst thousands of persons who were cheering and applauding his speech . . .

Several features of this memory are striking. There are, first, the two images of desire: a great theologian and a great orator. In both cases, moreover, there is the image of a man in the crowd, but a man apart: deliberate, grave, superior, admired. There is, finally, no role for anyone else; others may cheer or control the cheering crowds, but they are anonymous parts of the spectacle, never *sharing* in the spectacle, which is centred on the theologian-orator. It is a great pity that we have so few account of Azad's childhood from persons other than himself; we might have learned more about the person who was always so well concealed behind the deliberate gravity.

Compounding the difficulty of assessing Azad's life until after he had become famous as the editor of *Al-Hilal* is the problematic status and the inner contradictions of the accounts that are attributable to Azad. Of the two that are known to have been written by Azad, *Tazkira* is no autobiography at all. Most of it refers to his early ancestors, and the little that Azad says about himself is so shrouded in insinuation and rhetorical flourish that nothing resembling a fact emerges. We shall return to the significance of this particular arrangement later. Meanwhile, it is useful to first specify the actual status of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, the other direct source of biographical information. It purports to be a collection of private letters addressed to an actual friend, Nawab Habibur Rehman Khan Sherwani, but they were never mailed and were published in a book well before he saw them; the first three letters in the collection bear dates after Azad's release, the third one tells elaborately how private letters have come to be published instead of being mailed, and the key last letter was added only in the third edition of the book. The whole design is full of artifice. Malik Ram's suggestion

that Azad had probably seen the Arabic translation of Voltaire's *Persian Letters* and had borrowed the form from that book is quite astute. The so-called letters have, in other words, the formal status of *epistles*, i.e., a literary genre, meant for public circulation but written in the form of a private communication. Even here, the only epistle which gives us truly illuminating information about any period of his life is the magnificent last one; nos. 10 and 11 elaborate only on the first fourteen years, in ways both careful and misleading, and adding little to what we already know from the impressionistic account in *Tazkira*; for the crucial ten years of Azad's early life, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-four, these two epistles tell us nothing factual and are even more brief and elliptical than the evocations in *Tazkira*. To this too we shall return later.

It is useful also to clarify the status of the two lengthy 'autobiographical' accounts which are said to come from Azad but have been prepared by others. *India Wins Freedom* was published posthumously, based on Azad's dictation in Urdu and Humayun Kabir's condensation and re-arrangement of those materials in English. In his Preface, Kabir recapitulates the process, emphasising that each chapter had been revised under Azad's guidance, and that Azad had approved the final draft of each chapter separately as well as the final manuscript as a whole. We have no reason to question Kabir's integrity otherwise, and it is in any case very unlikely that Kabir would be interested in misrepresenting Azad's early life; it is worth remarking, however, that no authenticated final copy of the text exists to prove Azad's approval. The book says little about the period prior to 1935 in any case, and what little we do get in the 'Prospectus' which precedes the main text is highly problematic, as we shall see.

Then, we have the peculiar text of *Azad Ki Kahani Khud Azad Ki Zubani*, also published posthumously in 1959, by Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, Azad's close confidant of long-standing. The title is misleading, since it suggests that the text is from Azad himself; critics have challenged the authenticity of the text on the ground that the prose itself shows it to be not Azad's work. The point about the quality and cadence of the prose is correct, but it is somewhat misplaced. The title page of the first edition itself reveals that Malihabadi never claimed it to be Azad's own language; it clearly says '*ba-rivāyāt* Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi', i.e., 'as told by' Malihabadi. Problems are of a different kind. Malihabadi says that Azad told him the story in 1921 in prison; in fact, Azad was incarcerated from 10 December 1921 to 1 January 1923. Malihabadi's

error in remembering the correct year seems to suggest that he wrote it down much later, when the memory of precise dates had receded; if he could forget such a large fact about the origin of the book, it is legitimate to question the accuracy of facts recounted within the text. Furthermore, the contrast with Humayun Kabir's book is striking. For Kabir, Azad gave the dictation during the last two years of his life and it is perfectly credible that the book appeared posthumously because of Azad's unexpected death. According to Malihabadi himself, thirty-eight years elapsed between the dictation and the publication, which raises the question of Azad's approval. Kabir says explicitly that Azad approved drafts of each chapter; the difficulty of course is that we have only Kabir's word for it and no independent means of corroborating it. Malihabadi makes no such claim of making public an approved text, says explicitly that he had no intention of ever showing it to Azad (on the ground that Azad would have forbidden publication and confiscated the manuscript), and that he managed to retain the script all these years because Azad had simply 'forgotten' about it—with the inescapable implication that Malihabadi was waiting for Azad to die so that he could publish the story! That Azad would have forbidden publication is most likely, but it is inconceivable that a man of Azad's prodigious memory would forget a whole book he had dictated. Matters are complicated further by the fact that Malihabadi's text covers exactly the ground that is said to have been covered by Azad—whether by writing or by dictating is unclear—during the Ranchi internment, after the composition of what we know as *Tazkira*.

Fazluddin Ahmad, who occupied the same position in Azad's confidence at that time which Malihabadi was to occupy later, and who was responsible both for prodding Azad to write the book and for having it printed, says explicitly in his Preface to *Tazkira* that it is only the first of a projected two-volume work. That second volume never appeared but the general description of its contents which Fazluddin specifies there sound remarkably like the contents of the Malihabadi volume. Is it that Azad dictated the materials not to Malihabadi in 1922 but to Fazluddin some five years earlier, who then disappeared after falling out with Azad but somehow left the manuscript—otherwise presumed lost—in such a way that Malihabadi, who subsequently took charge of all Azad's journalistic and publishing affairs, found the manuscript and silently kept it? In that case, there would be no question of Azad having 'forgotten' anything; whatever Fazluddin had was presumed lost. This would also address the curious fact that no *original*



manuscript (i.e., plausibly taken down thirty years prior to publication) of the Malihabadi text, even in Malihabadi's own hand, has ever been found; perhaps the original was in someone else's handwriting, and Malihabadi had all the reason to not preserve it! The alternative is to believe that Azad never did give a dictation, that upon his death Malihabadi simply pieced together a memoir based upon what he had heard from Azad over the years, and then, using an artifice worthy of Azad himself, wrote it up *as if* Azad had actually dictated it. In either case, it would be unfair to hold Azad directly responsible for any misstatement of fact in that volume. Such, however, is not the case for the 'Prospectus' in *India Wins Freedom* where Humayun Kabir had no interest in distorting Azad's version of things and which he describes in his Preface as a 'synopsis' of a projected volume expressly approved by Azad.

Textual authenticity is a major issue in Azad studies because the facts of his early life are far from clear, because the various accounts are mutually conflicting, and because our understanding of his later career depends in part on the determination of those early facts. We know that he was born in Mecca, and 1888 is very likely the year of his birth; we also know that his father, Maulana Khairuddin, had given him the historical name 'Feroz Bakht'. Beyond that, facts become ambiguous. In the first known letter, addressed to Abdul Razzaq Kanpuri, he gave his name as 'Ghulam Mohiuddin Azad'; the same name appears with the publication of his *ghazal* in that same year in a journal from Lucknow, *Khadang-e-Nazar*. 'Mohiuddin' does rhyme with his father's name, so it is probable that it too was the real family name. 'Ahmad' was then inserted two years later. But the whole construction was then dropped, however, and the name as we now know it—Abul Kalam Azad—appeared for the first time in 1903, when he established his first journal, *Lisan al-Sidq*; but then he also added 'Dehlavi', which seems curious considering that he had never visited Delhi until then and none of the other members of his family had ever used that kind of identification.<sup>23</sup> By 1912, when Azad was twenty-four and started *Al-Hilal*, the name became appropriately more Arabised: Ahmad Al-Makani Babi al-Kalam Azad Dehlavi'. Even the origins of the name 'Azad' are unclear. In the 'Prospectus' Azad asserts that he adopted this name to indicate his rebellion against his family's orthodoxy.<sup>24</sup> It seems equally likely that he adopted it at the time when his first *ghazal* was to be published, keeping an eye on the fact that the journal in question published the poets in alphabetical order and he who had his name beginning with the sound 'aa' (an *alif* and a *mud*, in

Urdu) would be the first.<sup>25</sup>

The question of the year in which his family returned to India is equally unclear, and needs to be determined because that would clarify the nature of Azad's linguistic formation in the early years of his life. He is said to have not known much Arabic as a child because his mother was Arab and knew no Urdu. This is curious, considering that there is reason to believe that her parents had actually migrated to Mecca from the northwestern province of pre-Partition India, and it would be surprising for the daughter of an Indian *Alim* to know only Arabic and no Urdu.<sup>26</sup> In his Introduction to *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, Malik Ram writes that 'when his father came to India from Hejaz for the last time along with his family in 1898, Maulana Azad, who was then roughly ten years old, knew very little Urdu'. This is exactly what Azad says through Malihabadi in *Azad Ki Kahani* . . . and he often implied something of this kind elsewhere as well, without giving precise dates. Malik Ram in fact goes on to suggest here and in the Introduction to *Tazkira* that Azad later wrote such Arabic-laden prose because of his early upbringing in Arabic and his consequent uncertainty in Urdu. All of this seems very doubtful. That Azad would at times, in earlier stages of his life and in moments of weakness, want us to believe something like this makes a certain kind of sense; one's stature as a theologian is all the more secure if Arabic can be shown to have been one's mother tongue and the language of one's formative years. But that a scholar of Malik Ram's acumen and devotion to verification of facts would say such a thing is surprising.

In *India Wins Freedom* Azad himself says categorically: 'In 1890, my father came to Calcutta with the whole family . . . A year after we came to Calcutta, my mother died and was buried there'. This is contrary to Azad's earlier suggestions, but we do have this categorical statement from his very last book. If *this* is true, then Azad was two years old when he arrived in Calcutta, into an Urdu-speaking milieu, and three at the time of his mother's death. That there was knowledge of Arabic in the family is beyond doubt; but this other dating would suggest that Arabic was the language mainly of scholarship and piety, while Urdu was indeed the language of the family and the social milieu. Furthermore, there is the evidence of his Urdu *ghazals* of 1899 and 1900, which are fluent and well inflected in that particular style, as in the following two couplets:

*nashtar-ba-dil hai Aah kisi sakht-jan ki*  
*nikli sada to fasd khulaigi zuban ki*



*Kyun aseer-e-gaisu-e-khumdar-e-qatil ho gya  
Hai, kya baihe bithai tujh ko ai dil ho gya*

No boy who has freshly returned to India with scant knowledge of Urdu and with Arabic as his mother-tongue could possibly write *ghazals* of this kind, with their evident combination of spoken Urdu tonality and *Farsi* linguistic construction, of the type that was characteristic of the traditional Urdu *ghazal*. We might add that his prose of the next decade, up to 1910, demonstrates similar fluency of style but even a simpler diction, in the manner of Hali and Sir Syed, with no suggestion that the author is in any way steeped in Arabic or deficient in Urdu. The Arabic laden style of the *Al-Hilal* decade which Azad thereafter cultivated was thus a repudiation of that earlier mastery of fluent Urdu and amounted to a willed Arabisation designed to convey the author's great absorption in Islamic canonical texts, for writings which were addressed precisely to the *ulama* whose recognition Azad needed in order to become the 'Renovator' he had dreamed of becoming.

The existence of these published *ghazals* and of the prose he wrote even before he began editing *Lisan al-Sidq* raises some questions also about the portrait he has given us of his early education under the rigidly orthodox and harshly restrictive regime of his father and the teachers who were hand-picked by his father. In epistles 10 and 11 of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, he gives a very vivid picture of this regime. 'The part of my life which may be called my student days did not last longer than up to the age of fourteen or fifteen' and 'He [the father] adopted the method of teaching me either himself or by getting teachers who would live with us and teach me, so that I had no opportunity to put my foot out of the family compound.' He also says that a sense of full-scale rebellion set in at the age of fifteen but he had experienced no sense of conflict or dissatisfaction with the values of his family until then because he simply did not know that there were other ways of thinking and believing in the world. The picture we get in *India Wins Freedom* is less detailed and oppressive, but he does say,

I was able to complete the course by the time I was sixteen . . . It was soon after this that I first came across the writings of Sayyid Ahmed Khan.

The difficulty with all of this is that Azad was by his own account fourteen in 1902, sixteen in 1904, but he had published in 1899 *ghazals*

which had not even a shadow of that sort of training and his essays of 1902 already reveal extensive influence of Syed Ahmad Khan. Nor can *ghazals* of that kind be written all of a sudden; someone has to be steeped in that culture for a while before even the phrases would come. Moreover, Azad was reciting his *ghazals* in open *mushairas*, along with his brother, and both are said to have gained quite a literary reputation very quickly. We know very little about their sisters, but it seems that they too were composing *ghazals*. All this profane literary activity seems not to correspond to an orthodox regime of such harshness that the boy is not allowed even to set foot outside the family compound. It is worth recalling here that the mother had died, perhaps in 1891, and that all the children, boys and girls, were brought up under Khairuddin's direct supervision. The father, in other words, was not detached from the children's upbringing even to the degree that was normal in traditional homes of that era; that they, even the girls, could indulge their literary tastes and write profane *ghazals* inside that household says something about the atmosphere which prevailed there. Yet we get variations on the same story of extreme restrictiveness and utter lack of contact with anything but purest orthodoxy until the age of fifteen, in all the four accounts that can be attributed to Azad, directly or indirectly. It appears probable that he greatly exaggerated the extent of the punitive orthodoxy within the household in order to make all the more dramatic the break he made when he refused to follow his father's desire that he succeed the father as a *pir*.<sup>27</sup>

Since Azad published a great deal of work between 1899 and 1907, while also editing several journals and newspapers during the last five of these years, it is relatively easy to follow his career even without—and sometimes against the grain of—his own accounts. We face great difficulties for the next five years, until July 1912 when he begins to edit *Al-Hilal*. Some accounts, including Azad's own in the 'Prospectus', would have us believe that he was quite substantially involved in the revolutionary underground in Bengal at this time, and also that he travelled extensively in West Asia and France at the same time, perhaps 1908. Azad's own impressionistic account in *Tazkira* of his period of love, drunkenness and sexual excess, as well as his accounts in epistles 11 and 24 of *Ghubar-e-Khatir* of not only these 'sins' but also his love of music, which he says he pursued extensively in all kinds of places, from the Taj in Agra to the Opera House of Cairo, mention hardly any precise dates but it is possible to surmise from internal evidence that this was also the period of all that hectic hedonism. The precise chronology of all that is very hard to determine, but the matter

of his trip to West Asia, Egypt and Turkey in particular, should delay us considerably, for that is directly connected with three key issues: the process whereby he came to reject the thought of Syed Ahmad Khan in such wholesale fashion; his understanding of the distinct intellectual formations of Abduh, Rashid Rida and the man, Jamaluddin, who went under the name, alternatively, of Afghani and/or Asadabadi; and his understanding, also, of the politics of West Asian countries generally, and of Turkey in particular, at the time when he plunged into the polemics of *Al-Hilal* on the issue, first, of the Balkan War and, second, the Khilafat itself.

#### IV

In the last, magnificent letter of *Ghubar-e-Khatir* Azad writes about the two Arab singers, Ahmad Sallama and Taira, whom he heard and came to know personally when he visited Cairo.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, we have not even a sentence, neither in his own writings nor in the subsequent biographies which make much of his visit to West Asia, about the actual political figures—Arab nationalists, Young Turks, members of Mustafa Kamil's National Party—whom he is said to have met there.<sup>29</sup> This is a matter of some importance, since Azad himself cites this trip, with subsequent biographers simply taking him at his word, as evidence of his direct knowledge of the politics of that region and as the occasion when he fully understood the need for a united struggle of Muslims and Hindus against colonialism. There is in reality scant evidence, in all of Azad's copious writings of the crucial decade between the founding of *Al-Hilal* and the demise of the Khilafat movement, to show that Azad understood even the primary political facts concerning that region. In *India Wins Freedom*, Azad suggests that during his trip of 1908 his ideological affiliation was mainly with the reformist aspects of Shaikh Abduh (mismamed in the book as 'abdullah', on p.7) and the modernist secularism of Mustafa Kamil; his writings of the *Al-Hilal* period, by contrast, would appear to be inspired by the more extreme sections in the circle that arose around Rashid Rida, in direct opposition to Abduh's reform and Kamil's irreligious modernism. On a cognate theme, Azad simply states:

When I went to Turkey I became friends with some of the leaders of the Young Turk movement. I kept up my correspondence with them for many years after my return to India.

It is regrettable that we do not know the names of the 'leaders' whom Azad befriended or what they told him, about Khilafat among other things, either at the time or in the course of their correspondence over the 'many years' subsequently. For, the ideas that Azad expounded in the *Al-Hilal* period were diametrically opposed to the ones the so-called 'Young Turks' themselves held, with little evidence to suggest that Azad actually knew what those ideas were. At the very least, one can say that if Azad's intellectual affiliations at that time had been really with the thought of Abduh, Mustafa Kamil and the 'Young Turks', he would have found it impossible to dispense with the thought of Syed Ahmad Khan so easily, as we shall presently clarify.

When and where did Azad go, whom did he meet, what did he learn? Azad's own reference to this visit in *India Wins Freedom* puts the visit in early 1908, before his father's death, and mentions Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and France as the countries he visited; in Egypt, he says, he 'spent a long time'. The difficulty with this account is that his work on the two journals, *Vakil* and *Dar al-Saltanat*, shows him as being in India until the beginning of 1908,<sup>30</sup> while his father died on 15th of August that year; we know that Azad was in Calcutta at this later date, and Azad himself says that he was already in Paris when he heard of his father's illness. Given the difficulties of travel those days, it appears unlikely that one could visit five countries, spend a 'long time' in Egypt, strike up 'friendships' with 'leaders' of the Young Turks in Turkey, go all the way up to France and be back in Calcutta, so very quickly. Since the claim seems somewhat far-fetched, and because we know so little of the roughly two years that elapsed between his father's death and the founding of *Al-Hilal*, the temptation is to move the trip to this latter period. Thus, V.N. Datta gives no particular dates but says flatly.

After his father's death in 1908 Azad visited the West Asian countries and also France. This increased his knowledge of men and he became a man of the world.<sup>31</sup>

We shall come later to what 'a man of the world' should have known. It is significant nevertheless that Datta adds in the very next sentence that 'we get scant information about him in the interlude between the death of his father and his launching of *Al-Hilal*'. But two pieces of firm information he does offer. First, 'on the first death anniversary of his father, quite a large number of people including Khairuddin's disciples tried to persuade Azad to assume the office of *pir* but he

declined'; this appears to place Azad well inside India in August 1909. Further corroboration comes then, in a peculiar way, with the second piece of information: 'Azad's love episode took place in Bombay around 1909'. Datta offers no evidence for fixing a date for this 'love episode', but it is possible to infer this from *Tazkira*. Azad's own handling of the 'episode' in that text is so full of poetic ballast that it is impossible to extract from it what one may reasonably call a 'fact', but he does say that he gave up his life of *rindi-o-hawasnaki* (drunkenness and lust) at the age of *iktees-baees* (twenty-one/twenty-two), which does seem to place the 'episode' in 1909-10, provided that we do accept 1888 as the year of Azad's birth.<sup>32</sup> None of this can be asserted with any degree of certainty, but it seems fair to assume that Azad was inside India in 1909 as well.

In *India Wins Freedom*, meanwhile, he twice mentions the year of 1908 as the time of his travel and says explicitly that he was in Paris when he was informed of his father's illness and had to cut short his journey. It is possible that he forgot the actual year of his travels, but it seems highly unlikely that he would forget where he was when he heard of his father's last illness, especially if he was so far from home. So, the most we can say is that he was in India in the early months of 1908, and the brief spell between that and August of that year was the only time when he might have journeyed abroad; if he visited five countries he could not possibly have stayed anywhere for 'a long time'. That he travelled to Baghdad with his brother in 1906, got ill, and was promptly sent back to Calcutta, is much clearer; the famous Urdu writer, Sajjad Hyder Yaldaram, was serving in the British-Indian Consulate there, and we have his testimony for the event.

Be that as it may. The issue of his actual travel is far less significant than the issue of what he knew, then and later during the *Al-Hilal* decade, and how his knowledge has come to be seen subsequently. In all probability, Azad's knowledge of those parts of the world was derived mainly from his understanding of the *Salafiyya* movement of Rashid Rida, a Syrian Islamic scholar who had made his home in Egypt, and that too primarily through such journals as Rida's own *Al-Manar*. One can also assume that he was familiar with the writings of Jamaluddin Afghani, either directly or—what is more likely—in some derivative forms. Beyond that, nothing is very clear. Azad was of course magnificently well read in the traditional knowledge available in Urdu and Arabic, but it is much to be regretted that we know nothing about what else he might have known. He seems not to have known until after the *Al-Hilal* days enough English to read anything serious in it; everything he wrote about European history or culture that decade

is embarrassingly pedestrian.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, the knowledge he gained at the time about the complexities of modern history and international affairs was likely to remain very sketchy and highly tendentious, because his main sources were drawn overwhelmingly from the publications of very conservative *ulama* who tended to greatly exaggerate their own role and to both belittle and misrepresent the ideas and actions of other, far more important and powerful forces. It is generally recognised that key leaders of the Khilafat movement, such as the Ali brothers and Azad, were utterly dumbfounded at the fact that the Turks would themselves abolish the Osmanli Khilafat and dynastic rule,<sup>34</sup> and the movement, entirely unprepared for this denouement, petered out in confusion. One wonders why they were so unprepared to anticipate the emergence of a *Europeanised* Republic in the case of any part of Turkey regaining sovereignty after World War I. Why, in other words, had they staked the passions of Indian Muslims on the fate of a moribund institution, namely the Osmanli Khilafat, which had been exceedingly unpopular with the great majority of its Turkish and Arab subjects since its revival by Hamidian Despotism in the 1870s? Since the question of Azad's actual understanding of the politics and predominant political currents in Egypt and West Asia is directly connected with the broader, more crucial question of both the ideological foundations as well as the nature of the collapse of the Khilafat movement, it might be useful to introduce two substantial digressions to address this question and, in the process, to address also the extremely complex matter of the shifting relations between Azad's thought and that of Sir Syed.

## V

The main reality of Turkey that was overlooked in the Khilafat movement was that, well before the Meiji revolution in Japan though much less thoroughly than in Japan, Turkey had had, of all the Asian countries, the most far-reaching movement of bourgeois reform of state and economy, collectively known as *Tanzimat*, starting with the abolition of *timars* (military fief, and the material basis of Osmanli feudalism) in 1831, and going through first a radical phase under Mahmud II until 1839 and then a less radical one which too lasted until after 1861, when Sultan Abdul Majid died.<sup>35</sup> Given that the bulk of the Balkan subjects of the Empire were non-Muslim, as was the mercantile bourgeoisie of Armenian Christians and Turkish Jews which dominated the modern sector, the essential thrust of this reform movement was towards secular governance; this thrust was made all the sharper by the cultural



Europeanisation of the leading figures of the movement. Thus, for example, the separation between the *Shariat* courts, with very limited jurisdiction, and the general civil and criminal courts, with paramount jurisdiction, had been effected in the Osmanli realms in the very first decade after the break-up of the Jan-nissar Force, greatly diminishing the special powers of the *mevleviat* (the religious orders), in 1826. The Khilafat, which was revived after the retreat of *Tanzimat* and was then enshrined in the Osmanli Constitution of 1876 ('His Majesty the Sultan is, in his capacity of Supreme Caliph, the protector of the Muslim religion'), and which was to become such a large issue in Indian Islam half a century later, had actually signalled a defeat of the reform movement by the retrograde Sultan, Abdul Hamid, who started by abolishing the Parliament. This unpopular Sultan had raised the slogan of 'Islamic Khilafat', in other words, to gain support in the more traditional circles, mainly in the provinces of the Osmanli Empire which had been lost already to Czarist Russia. Inside Turkey, it was largely an unpopular slogan both because it was raised by an unpopular autocrat and because the idea of a theocratic institution ran counter to the main trajectory of the *Tanzimat* which had taken deep roots over a span of roughly forty years among the military officers as much as the civil servants, the aristocracy and the vast majority of the urban Third Estate, even though some intellectuals like Jevdet Pasha kept advocating a mildly Islamic caste to the legal structure in order to keep a link between the old and the new. Meanwhile, there were two other kinds of nationalisms which were far more popular than the royalist pan-Islamic nationalism. There was, first, the 'Osmanli nationalism' which, referred not to the dynasty but to the territory of the Empire as a whole, was secular in its outlook, and sought to include all the subjects of the Osmanli Empire as it was then constituted, irrespective of religion or linguistic background. This was espoused by a great many intellectuals as well as by the main political formation arising out of the defeat of the *Tanzimat* in the 1860s, namely the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) among whom the so-called 'Young Turks' were a tendency. (The phrase 'Young Turks' was of French coinage, taken over by the British, and used pejoratively by them just as the word 'Wahhabi' was used to designate all kinds of Muslim anti-colonialism.) The other was the 'Turkic nationalism', which envisioned a state of Turkish-speaking people and was expounded by such personages as the sociologist Ziya Gokalp and the military leader Enver Pasha; this too was stridently secular, but it was willing to give up the non-Turkic Balkan subjects

if it could regain the Turkish-speaking provinces annexed by Czarist Russia. It was, in other words, willing to cut a deal with the Franco-British axis against Russia to let go of the Balkan provinces if it could re-claim the Czarist annexations; pressed from both sides, though, it found itself allied with Germany. Mustafa Kemal, who eventually took power in 1919 and established the secular Republic in 1923, was a close associate of Enver Pasha and belonged to this tendency; hence the name he then took in the 1930s, *Ataturk*, Father of the Turks. Both these nationalisms, the secular Osmanli nationalism and the equally secular Turkic nationalism, saw Turkey as a *European* nation, and they inevitably converged after the War on the ideology of Kemalism, a policy of break-neck Europeanisation, and a strategic alliance with Britain and the United States which has lasted until today, as we could see in the Turkish collusion with the Anglo-American Alliance in the recent war against Iraq.

Meanwhile, there were burgeoning movements of Arab self-determination against the Osmanli imperialism, which were doubtless exploited by European colonialism but had histories of their own. Both Syria (which included Palestine and Lebanon at the time, and was part of the Osmanli realms) and Egypt (which was no longer in the realms) had had their own reform movements, in which Christian intellectuals played a very considerable part, because large sections of the Christian minorities were located in modern commerce and were therefore educationally more advanced and socially more cosmopolitan than the typical members of the Muslim *latifundia*. The most advanced expression of those ideological developments had come in the shape of the Egyptian *Nahda* (Resurgence) of the 1880s, sweeping the whole of the Third Estate, the new professional petty bourgeoisie even more than the bazaar and the traditional *ulama*, who all had their social roots in the only serious effort at industrialisation undertaken anywhere in Asia and Africa during the early years of the nineteenth century, in Muhammed Ali's Egypt which had seen itself as a rival of the Osmanli dynasty and as both a reforming force and a natural leader in the whole of the Arab regions. Thanks to realities of this kind, there was little enthusiasm for the Osmanli religious claims in the Arab world as well. Even Rashid Rida,<sup>36</sup> from whom Azad took so many of his ideas, was secretly in sympathetic touch with the British-sponsored Sherif of Mecca against the Osmanlis.<sup>37</sup>

Azad says that he met some 'Young Turks' in Egypt in 1908 and then made friends with some of their 'leaders' when he visited Turkey

later that year; he says he corresponded with those 'leaders' for some years subsequently. Now, 1908 was the year of CUP's decisive *coup* against Abdul Hamid, the monarch who had made the largest claims for 'Khilafat' in the past and who was now deposed and exiled to Salonika; it was this *coup* which first brought the term 'Young Turks' in wide currency, referring to their swift use of military force. There was an attempted Islamicist uprising against the CUP, very large and very brutal in the provincial town of Iderne, but not so effective elsewhere. Mustafa Kemal, who was to abolish the Khilafat in 1924, was, in 1908, the Chief of Staff in Shafqat Pasha's Army, next only to Enver Pasha, when it marched into Istanbul and suppressed the pro-Hamidian agitation. Was Azad still in Egypt or was he already in Turkey, perhaps in the Istanbul of Kemal's troops and gunfire? His bland statements in *India Wins Freedom* refer to nothing that was actually happening in Turkey. His father died in August, and Azad says that he had already visited Turkey and had arrived in Paris when he heard of his father's illness; he returned to Calcutta before his father died. Was he in Turkey in, say, April? That was when Kemal had opened fire on the Islamicist opposition. Had Azad been anywhere near Turkey at the time he would have known that the Khilafat was finished, that the new rulers were agnostic and Europeanised, holding the new monarch a prisoner in his palace. The subsequent Balkan War, which launched Azad on his Khilafatist career, led to the iron rule of the troika of Generals—Enver, Talat and Jemal Pashas, none of them notably religious—which guaranteed CUP dominance through all the War years, until the final defeat in 1918; Kemal rose from fame to fame even as the Turkish Army kept losing the War. By the time a campaign for the restoration of the Khilafat was fully launched in India, with Azad declaring it as an act of *Shariat* and divine injunction, the fate of the institution inside Turkey had been sealed by the defeat itself as well as by the deliberations of the military officers who used the Sultan's name only because his writ still ran in the mosques and because the defeat in the War had made it impossible to properly install a successor.

Throughout the *Al-Hilal* decade, Azad never penned an analysis of CUP, the burgeoning Kemalism, the power structure that actually obtained in Turkey; instead, he offered a highly embellished picture of a beleaguered Turkey, fervent in its religious faith, united behind its Khalifa, waging war against the infidels on behalf of the whole Islamic world.

Why such a gap between the facts as they actually were in Turkey and the representation of those facts by Azad over roughly a decade? Was it ignorance of facts, or studied suppression of facts? One possible explanation of course is that Azad *knew* the facts, kept hoping that the small Islamicist tendency inside Turkey would prevail against the predominant structure of power, methodically avoided writing the truth about the overwhelmingly Europeanist thrust of the Turkish establishment and presented it in a religious light instead, in order to mobilise the Indian Muslims on the issue of religion and unite them under the leadership of the *ulama* headed by himself as *Imam al-Hind*, not so much to help change things in West Asia as to combat the secularist tendencies in Muslim Indian politics, which he associated with the 'Aligarh' tendency and with men like Jimmah certainly, but also with far more powerful figures like Mohamed Ali, editor of the competing journals, *Comrade* and *Hamdard*, who had not been until the Allied invasion of Turkey particularly religious. It is likely that something of this kind was going on in Azad's mind at the time, though not in so stark and Machiavellian a way, since any one-sided emphasis on such a scheme presumes, at the very least, that Azad did really understand the facts correctly and that his own pan-Islamicist passions and rhetorical turn of mind did not fundamentally distort his understanding of the facts. It is equally likely that his knowledge of the facts of West Asian and Egyptian affairs was in reality very sketchy and that he was prone to misinterpret even what little he knew because of his prior disposition to see everything in pan-Islamicist terms and in accordance with the highly tendentious materials which he had been receiving in the mail from such groupings in the Arab world, mainly Cairo.

Certain kinds of pan-Islamicist thinking had great hold on sections of the Muslim intelligentsia in the first quarter of this century. Throughout the *Al-Hilal* decade Azad had preached a pan-Islamicist anti-colonialism as an antidote against the pro-colonial loyalism of Syed Ahmad Khan and the 'Aligarh tendency' generally. This attack on Sir Syed from a pan-Islamicist, pro-Khilafatist position had first surfaced at the time of Afghani's initial impact in India, and subsequent accounts of the period have usually reduced the terms of that multi-faceted confrontation to the single issue of 'loyalism', hence setting up the debate in such a way that pan-Islamism is shown to be both anti-colonial and anti-communalist while the whole complex issue of what Sir Syed actually represented is dissolved into the charge of capitulationism. This simplification is what we should like to examine in relation to Azad

whose career in *Lisan al-Sidq* started as a disciple of Sir Syed, who then repudiated and virulently attacked his erstwhile intellectual mentor during the *Al-Hilal* decade when he adopted a Pan-Islamism of the characteristically Jamaluddin Afghani kind,<sup>38</sup> and whose positions after the *Tarjuman* came to resemble very many of Sir Syed's positions, as we shall argue below. Thanks to this extremely complex triangular relation between Jamaluddin Afghani, Sir Syed and Azad, it is best to clarify some things about the exact nature of the many differences between Jamaluddin Afghani and Syed Ahmad and the way they get played out in Azad's own life at different junctures.

## VI

Like Azad himself, Jamaluddin Afghani was also a man about whose origins and early development we know little, because, in each case, the protagonist has either remained silent or provided contradictory information. It is by now fairly assumed in the relevant scholarship that his claim of being by birth an Afghani was false. He probably assumed this identity to pass himself off as a Sunni among Sunnis, given the fact that he spent most of his time among the Sunnis of India, Egypt, Turkey. Inside Iran where he had some unfortunate encounters with the Crown, his presumed Sunni and Afghani identity protected him from being treated as a subject of that Crown. He is now presumed to have been born in Asadabad, an Irani provincial town, in a Shia family. There are also strong suggestions that in his youth he secretly joined the Babi tendency, which eventually flowered into the Bahais, first treated as a dissident sect within Islam and then as non-Muslims, something like the Ahmadis in Pakistan. Like Azad, he too was accused, in his day and for decades thereafter, of having adopted the traditional Islamic personality as a 'pose'. That is doubtful, in both cases. After all Jamaluddin Afghani had no reason other than his faith, as an obscure Asian living in Paris, to take on a personage no less than Renan in defence of orthodox Islam, as he did in a public lecture. The other charge against him is more grave and somewhat less easily refutable, namely that he was *always* an agent of the Turkish Sultan, the conservative Abdul Hamid, who had revived the forgotten claims of the Khilafat in order, precisely, to win support of the Muslim masses in the British domains and to use that support as a pressure on the British to obtain concessions in the European theatres of war and trade. It is said that Jamaluddin Afghani was despatched by the Sultan to the various countries

either ruled by Britain or with substantial British interests (India, Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan) to incite the Muslim populations against the British and to propagate the idea of Osmanlı Khilafat among people who had not taken the idea very seriously for some generations. The suggestion was first made by British Intelligence, which renders it suspect; but Jamaluddin Afghani did attach himself openly and permanently to the Sultan's court in the last years of his life, and the evident fact that this man, with no visible source of his own funds, would so regularly appear in greatly divergent places at critical junctures, always pressing the issue of religious loyalty to the Turkish Sultan, does seem somewhat curious.

When Jamaluddin Afghani came to India, he attacked Syed Ahmad Khan not on two issues but five: the latter's subservience to the British; the issue of multi-religious unity against the British; Syed Ahmad's departures from orthodox *shariat*; the issue of materialist philosophy; and the issue of modern education. Contemporary historiography, submitting itself to pan-Islamicist positions, recalls only the first two issues but elides the later three, in which the real complexity of Sir Syed lies and on which Jamaluddin Afghani's thought was at best vacuous and often obscurantist.

On the issue of Syed Ahmad's pro-British stance, this historiography is absolutely right, although we need to keep two other factors in mind as well. The first is that Afghani's own penchant for the most retrograde Muslim rulers *because* they were Muslim after all, also deserves some scrutiny. Second, the question of 'loyalism' is itself complex, in the sense that, without in any way defending Sir Syed's mendicancy with respect to the British, it is worth remarking that such mendicancy was fairly characteristic of most nineteenth century reform movements, including the predominant bulk of the so-called Bengal Renaissance—not to speak of Gandhi himself who had a long career of such 'loyalism' until many years after Sir Syed had died. Thus, summing up his own attitude on the eve of the Boer War, Gandhi had ~~declared~~

... My loyalty to the British rule drove me to participation with the British in that war. I felt that, if I demanded rights as a British citizen, it was also my duty, as such, to participate in the defence of the British Empire.<sup>39</sup>

Even as late as World War I, Gandhi was not only recruiting soldiers for the British Army but also writing to the Viceroy: 'I love the English

nation, and I wish to evoke in every Indian the loyalty of Englishmen."<sup>40</sup> In context, then, the issue of Sir Syed's 'loyalism' is somewhat complex. In brief, the loyalism and wholesale abjection in the face of the colonialist forms of British thought which we find in Sir Syed, who represented the most advanced sectors of the U.P. Muslim zamindars in the latter half of the 19th century, was neither greater nor structurally different from identical attitudes on the part of analogous representatives of the Bengal Hindu zamindars and Company *gumasthas* at a comparable level of class development in the first half of the same century. Sir Syed's loyalism stands out sharply because (a) it came *after* 1857; (b) we tend to compare it with the different kinds of development which had occurred among the professional and commercial strata in those other parts of the country which had longer periods of gestation within colonial society; and, (c) this modernist loyalism was contradicted, among sections of U.P. Muslims, by the anti-British activities of the segment of the *ulama* tracing their ideological lineage from Syed Ahmad Bareilwi, a group of whom had founded the Dar al-ulum at Deoband in 1876, barely a year before Sir Syed founded his Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. The paradox of this latter comparison of course is that while Sir Syed's political position, on the colonial question, was doubtless retrograde in comparison with that of the Deoband *ulama*, it is equally beyond doubt that his social and educational philosophy, and even his theological position, was comparatively far more advanced. On the issue of Law, for example, Syed Ahmad's ideas were identically those of the Turkish *Tanzimat* and the Central Asian *Jadidya* of Shuhabad Din Marjani, all of which he had studied fairly closely: a vastly narrowed *sharia* for strictly religious affairs, and a much wider and more powerful domain of *qanoon* (civil and criminal law), both secular in inspiration and dynamic in development, for the governance of society as such.

Sir Syed shared with Ghalib—and before Ghalib, Rammohun Roy and others—a certain fascination with positivist rationalism, utilitarian social thought, and technological scientificity, which he associated, like them, with 'Western civilization'. Like Rammohun, he took this positivist and utilitarian world-view into a revisionist re-reading of religious ideology and tried to combine this, exactly as Rammohun had done some fifty years earlier, with what he knew of Arab-Islamic pre-modern rationalism on the one hand, Christian Unitarianism on the other. Rammohan knew much more about Unitarianism and had the additional ingredient of Vedantic philosophies as well; Sir Syed's knowledge of

medieval Muslim rationalism was far more extensive and he was not willing to go nearly as far as Rammohun, but some of the basic elements in the blend were the same. Nothing remotely resembling Brahmo came out of Sir Syed's revisionist project, which remained within the traditions first established by the Mutazila, but he did establish a new trend in Islamic exegetical learning which has given to it an ecumenism and a modernist liberality in sharp contrast to the pietistic tradition of Shah Waliullah which Sir Syed partly accepted but largely overturned. The breadth of this ecumenism can be gauged from the following, for example:

God sent his prophets for their moral improvement. It is absurd to believe that the Prophets appeared only in Arabia and Palestine to reform a handful of Arabs and Jews, and that God condemned the peoples of Africa, America, and Asia to ignorance. . . it was immaterial whether the Prophet was from China, America, Mongolia, Africa, India, or Iran, or if he preached God's message to the savage or the civilized.<sup>41</sup>

There is nothing in the tradition of Shah Waliullah which would authorise a statement of this kind, nor does Azad's later and famous doctrine of *Wahdat-e-Adyaan* go notably beyond this formulation, which specifically denies the primacy of Islam or Christianity over other religious traditions. We might add that it was this kind of heterodoxy, combined with Sir Syed's burgeoning affinity with modern secular thought, which drew Jamaluddin Afghani's special ire, so that the diatribe he penned against Sir Syed, *Refutation of the Materialists*, which is in the Arab world the most widely known of all Jamaluddin Afghani's writings, is focused not on the issue of 'loyalism' but on the issue of heterodoxy, secularism and modern rationality, namely, issues on which Jamaluddin Afghani expounds with breathtaking obscurantism. Even the issue of 'loyalism', in fact, Jamaluddin Afghani's denunciations is related not only to the specific issue of British colonialism but to the much larger issue of Sir Syed's modernist assertion that Muslims could very well live under the rule of non-Muslims provided that freedom of worship and rights of property were guaranteed. Part of Sir Syed's hostility towards the Osmanli Khilafat, which Jamaluddin Afghani unreservedly supported, was caused by his loyalty towards the British; but part of it was rooted in Sir Syed's own ideas about the religiously composite territorial nation in India as



well as his hostility towards Hamidian despotism as an autocracy. In this latter emphasis, Sir Syed was much closer to the bourgeois liberalism of the *Tanzimat*, which Hamidian despotism had overturned, as well as to the spirit of the later 'Young Turks'-from CUP to Kemalism-with which Azad was to claim affiliation but which he seems to have misunderstood.

Azad's own relationship with (a) Sir Syed's *thought* and (b) with the Aligarh tradition as such, needs to be periodised as well as disaggregated. As a young boy, launching on his own career with *Lisan al-Sidq*, Azad had modelled himself on the traditions and thoughts of Sir Syed as he found them in the writings of the latter. His views seem to have started undergoing a change when he came closer to Maulana Shibli Nomani. It is well to remember that Shibli had himself been associated with Aligarh, but, driven by a view of Islam much narrower than that of Sir Syed, he had left Aligarh in protest not just against its colonialist moorings but also its predominant emphasis on modern education, because what Shibli truly wanted was not a university, in the modern sense, but a Dar al-ulum in the seminarian sense, where some rudimentary training in modern subjects may be undertaken but where the emphasis would remain on the training of a religious intelligentsia, which is more or less what he subsequently tried at Nadwat al-ulama. A far more strident version of this very attitude appears in Azad's writings of the *Al-Hilal* decade, after he had imbibed the most conservative aspects of Jamaluddin Afghani's ideas through the writings of Rashid Rida, the Syrian Islamic scholar who had made his home in Egypt; had produced a far more systematic knowledge of Islamic *Shariat* than anything that Jamaluddin Afghani had ever been capable of; and had pitched himself directly in opposition to the Sir Syed-like reforms of Mohammad Abduh. Alongside his quite justified denunciation of Aligarh for its loyalism, there also runs, in Azad's writings of this period, a quite exaggerated invective stream which portrays Aligarh as a hotbed of *Ilhad* (atheism).<sup>42</sup> In reality, the general balance of the place was characterised, rather, by a peculiar blend of a very colonial kind of limited Anglicism on the one hand, and, on the other, extreme social conservatism characteristic of the more provincial sections of the Muslim landed gentry and the emergent professional petty bourgeoisie, while the grand taluqdars hardly ever sent their sons there. Few, if any, actually lost their religion at Aligarh, and Sir Syed himself had been so much on the defensive on the question of Islamic conservatism that his own theology had not been

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contemporary sense. Two other things, though, can be said with fair certainty. One is that as a representative of the Muslim propertied classes, it was the sectoral interest of those classes that he was most obsessed with; in this too, he was not very different from most 19th century reformers, who were as a rule concerned mainly with the interests of the class and community to which they belonged. 'Communalism' in that sense was a widespread phenomenon, among Hindus and Muslims alike. Secondly, he certainly was blindly opposed to the Congress, silently for the first three years after its inception in 1885, in more and more strident ways thereafter. Reasons for that too are complex and we need not go into all that, but it is worth remarking that in the two decades prior to the founding of the Congress, Hindu-nationalist and revivalist tendencies had grown in many circles, especially among the Bengali bhadralok and including groupings which were to be active in the Congress.<sup>43</sup> Specifically, the combination of empathizing with British colonial rule as a desirable civilizational project on the one hand, and, on the other, the casting of the Muslim as the true oppressor of the Hindu 'nation' was more common in late 19th century Bengal than is generally conceded. In a sense, then, the combination of pro-British loyalism and devotion to Muslim particularity that we find in Sir Syed was a mirror-image of a number of positions that were both fashionable and powerful in great many 'Hindu' formations-and not only 'Hindu' either; as Sumit Sarkar points out, even groupings within Brahmo held similar views. These coordinates of the historical situation do not excuse Sir Syed's own role, but they do help us understand why the man who wanted to use the word 'Hindu' for the whole of the Indian nation, and one who had refused to grant, on the issue of the Osmanli Khilafat, that Indian Muslims owed any extra-territorial loyalty to anyone outside India, could himself start taking outright sectarian position.

It is also worth remarking that the question whether the Congress was truly secular and whether, therefore, it could really represent the 'Muslims', i.e., the Muslim gentry who had a stronghold on much of the Muslim population-was to remain the perennial question of the national movement throughout its history, culminating in the tensions that erupted when the Congress first formed Ministries in the Muslim minority provinces during 1937-39 and in the subsequent political crises leading up to the Partition. Sir Syed's irreconcilably hostile attitude after 1887 was certainly unjustified, but the question he was raising was a real one, even though his own answer was manifestly wrong.

In Egypt, where Jamaluddin Afghani had the widest influence, his followers were split in two camps. After some years of close association with him on all issues, Mohammad Abduh, Afghani's closest associate, renounced his pan-Islamicist radicalism, adopted a pro-British stance analogous to Sir Syed's loyalism, got himself appointed the Grand Mufti under Cromer, launched on various 'reforms' within the colonial predicates, first at Al-Azhar, then in a new Dar al-ulum, but most substantially in the domains of law and jurisprudence, modelled very much on the Turkish *Tanzimat* and not unlike the civil and penal codes which the British were instituting in India. Rashid Rida, who had known Jamaluddin Afghani and had been very close to Abduh initially, repudiated that trajectory, drifted away and established a revivalist movement of his own, *Al-Salafiyya* (after the Arabic word '*Aslaf*', meaning 'ancestors'), with a journal of his own, *Al-Manar* ('The Lighthouse'), adopting the more conservative of Jamaluddin Afghani's religious ideas but, unlike the master, settling down to produce a vast body of literature for systematic exposition of those ideas. Out of his fundamentalist circle arose Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the *Ikhwan al Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood) which then spawned a whole host of fundamentalist movements in the Arab world over the greater part of this century.

In India, it was principally through Azad's writings of the *Al-Hilal* period that Rida was to exercise an indirect influence. By the 1970s, the *Ikhwan* were to exercise much more direct influence over the Jamaat-e-Islami, doubtless more in Pakistan than in India. What is remarkable about Azad's writings of the *Al-Hilal* period is that he seems to greatly exaggerate the importance of the pan-Islamicist movement in the very countries, Egypt and West Asia, with which he was then the most concerned. Rida represented in his time an extremely small tendency. In the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, which occurred as Azad was coming out of Ranchi internment and about which he had nothing knowledgeable to say, Rida's group, not even organised as a political force, played no part; the revolution was led by the entirely secular *Wafd* and made by the urban masses under the hegemony of the equally secular Third Estate. Under the circumstances, Egypt could no more have a Khulafat movement than did the Turkey of CUP and Mustafa Kemal. It is unfortunate that Azad did not at the time understand all that. Had he and other leaders of the Khulafat movement in India understood the full complexity of the situation as it in fact prevailed in Egypt and West Asia, they might have been able to channelise more productively the enormous passions they had aroused, and they

might have also salvaged out of the collapse of the movement somewhat more than they actually did.

In context, then, we may justifiably dislike Sir Syed's colonialist loyalism but we cannot so easily dismiss his warnings, regarding the Osmanli Khilafat, that Indian Muslims should not be asked to have extra-territorial loyalties toward an Islamic *imperium* located elsewhere (Azad's famous 'political centre' of the Islamic world in Constantinople). Likewise, we may equally justifiably castigate Jinnah, at a later point in history, for his constitutionalist distance from the Non-Co-operation movement, but we cannot so easily dismiss his emphatic warning that the Khilafat was an 'exploded bogey' and that a mass movement which aroused such passions on so ambiguous an issue would inevitably disintegrate into mass disaffection and directionless despondency. For, the paradox of the Khilafat movement turned out to be that while it was the first time that large masses of Indian Muslims were mobilised into the anti-colonial movement, it eventually petered out in such confusion that little could be retrieved out of that wreckage to stem the tide of Hindu-Muslim communal conflagrations which came close on the heels of the Hindu-Muslim unity of the Non-Co-operation/Khilafat days. The decade of the 1920s began in euphoria but ended in chaos—worse than chaos, because communal strife at the mass base was matched by an impasse in elite politics so profound that by 1928, when the Nehru Report failed to resolve the differences, Jinnah reportedly wept and declared, prophetically as it turned out, that the failure marked the final 'parting of the ways'.<sup>44</sup>

## VII

Azad is a difficult person to write about. Unlike Gandhi, for example, who had an obsessive penchant for constant public confession, much of Azad's life, especially up to the late 1920s, is shrouded in large silences, even mystery and misdirection. One has the impression of a life formidable in historical stature and social consequence but also one that remained very largely sketchy and unformed. The difficulty, perhaps, is that Azad did undertake a very great deal but most of what he undertook, he had the habit of leaving unfinished.

There are four texts that could reasonably give us an autobiography, but we are not sure about even the authorship of two of them and, together, they give us no consistent or reliable portrait for any phase of his life except roughly the last decade before the Partition. The imminent publication of a great work of Theology was announced in

1915 but the project remained unrealizable for the next forty years or more, and the *Tarjuman* which did get published covers only half of the Quran, with the *Tafsir*, incorporated into the translation, remaining at best fragmentary. It is said that he joined the revolutionary underground in Bengal, but the evidence is so indirect and sketchy that it is reasonable to doubt the extent of the actual involvement; his scheme for a Dar al-Irshad, a centre where volunteers could be trained simultaneously in Islamic piety and anti-colonial militancy remained, like so many of Azad's plans, mostly a dream. In great many circles his reputation rests upon the writings of the *Al-Hilal* decade, but roughly the last two decades of his own life are, in effect, a repudiation of the theological premise, the pan-Islamicist political thrust, even the prose style of that famous decade. He spent that decade defending the cause of Turkey and mobilising immense resources of Indian energies in the service of that cause, but his own writings of that time would be the last place that one would go to if one wanted to know something about the Turkey of that time. The fame of his literary genius is enormous, but as we look for the achievement we have only *Ghubar-e-Khatir* and, much less so, *Karawaan-e-Khayal*, two collections of epistles; *Tazkira* is not only largely unreadable but its doggedly medievalist method stands also in direct opposition to the tradition of modern Urdu prose, from Ghalib to Premchand and far beyond, which has sought to give to the spoken vernacular the status of true literature.

Azad was India's first Education Minister and held that post for over a decade, but he has left behind neither a personal influence on the actual system of education in India nor any work on educational philosophy; we know what Nehru's foreign or economic policies were, but we know nothing very clearly about Azad's educational policy, beyond of course some superbly written addresses which provide us with some general statements of decent desire. He was a famous scholar of Islam, a powerful political leader, doubtless deeply concerned about Indian Muslims, but he never did build an institution, a school of thought, a political movement, or a group of scholars that would carry on his kind of work in that arena. His great erudition is of course unquestionable, but the evidence of his writing does not suggest that this erudition included, in even vaguely systematic way, anything other than the very traditional knowledges that were available in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu. About the world beyond India and the Islamic Middle East, his knowledge was sketchy, and even in his preferred domains of theology and poetry—especially in poetry—he paid scant attention to twentieth century achievements.

We have written at length about Azad's swift turns through much of his life up to the Ramgarh Address as well as of his shifting relationship with Sir Syed's ideas. This matter might bear some concluding remarks. For, Sir Syed died in 1898 and Azad published his first *ghazal* in a major journal the next year. One career ended, in other words, as the other got poised to begin. It is unclear from Azad's own accounts just when he started reading Sir Syed's work; the Malihabadi text says that he came across the work while the older man was still alive, *India Wins Freedom* gives a considerably later date. We know, in any case, that Azad knew that work exceedingly well by the time he established *Lisan al-Sidq*, which was modelled in some ways on Sir Syed's famous journal, *Tahzeeb al-Akhlaq*. We also know that he started departing from those positions very soon thereafter and the founding of *Al-Hilal*, in 1912, involved a full repudiation of all of Sir Syed's positions. We have suggested also that the doctrine of *Wahdat-e-Adyaan* which Azad expounded in the 1930s was in some ways a return to the kind of ecumenism we find in some of Sir Syed's revisionist theology; also that the fully secular basis for Indian nationhood which Azad finally adopted in the Ramgarh Address in 1940, implicitly repudiating the search for a religious definition, was not much more advanced than the positions that Sir Syed had often held up to 1884. And, we have also suggested that the marked change in prose style that we find from *Taskira*, the purported masterpiece of the *Al-Hilal* decade, to the post-Ramgarh collection of *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, amounts, in sum, to a return to the main tradition of Urdu prose as it had been fashioned in the nineteenth century, principally by Ghalib and Sir Syed. What we find, in other words, is a career which, in its intellectual formation, begins where Sir Syed had already arrived by 1880 or so, and which returns in its mature years, after a very long detour of thirty years or more, to positions that Sir Syed had already occupied; it was only on the issue of 'loyalism' that Azad's intellectual career was, in relation to Sir Syed, from beginning to end a real advance.

But that breakthrough Azad had achieved already by 1906, thanks to the shifts that had taken place in the political climate of the country. Had he combined that breakthrough with a commitment to modern and secular ideas, he might have been able to make the break into popular idioms of resistance that Sir Syed never could, because of the colonialist allegiance and elite location. Instead, Azad started following the chimeras of pan-Islamism and orthodox theological eminence, devising for himself in the process a personality that was remote from mass struggles and

a cultural idiom which was not even intelligible to common people. It is indeed the case that the colonialist modernization which was led by men like Sir Syed in India and Mohammad Abduh in Egypt was far from adequate, but the pan-Islamism that arose in opposition to that project proved to be even narrower and more disorienting. If Abduh ended as Cromer's Grand Mufti, Jamaluddin Afghani ended up as a courtier of Sultan Abdul Hamid. If the 'Aligarh tendency' gave rise eventually to an intelligentsia which became one of the backbones of Muslim separatism, Jamaluddin Afghani's brand of pan-Islamism became narrowly revivalist under Rashid Rida, giving rise to the retrograde fundamentalisms of the Muslim Brotherhood in a dozen countries.

It is much to be regretted that when Azad recognised, as a young man, the limitation of Sir Syed's kind of modernization, he could find no means of transcending it in the direction of a better secularism, a genuinely popular and enlightened anti-colonialism, a programmatic mobilization of the poverty-stricken Muslim masses against the landed gentry and the commercial interests which eventually organised the politics of the Partition. Instead, he descended into hyperboles of revivalist fundamentalism and the dream of leading the Muslims of India as an *Imam al-Hind*. From all that he was eventually rescued by the rise of Kemalism in Turkey itself and his increasing assimilation into the Indian national movement. In the latter phase, we find him affiliated with secularist position and uncompromising nationalism. But unlike Gandhi who mobilised scores of millions by combining anti-colonial nationalism with social and religious reform, and unlike Jawaharlal Nehru who represented programmatic positions on a whole range of issues from diplomacy to land reform, Azad always remained a man of orations and conferences, unable to transcend elite forms of politics or to frame a mobilising programme of social and religious reform among Muslims that might have detached them from separatist politics by linking anti-colonial sentiment and secularist political vision with demands of social and economic justice. Men like Abdul Ghaffar Khan who were able to do precisely that remained regional leaders, finally ineffectual in saving the Congress from communal politics on the All-India scale.

The sharpest contrast in any case is with Jinnah. Their social origins could not have been more different: Azad traced his lineage back to the master theologians of Delhi in days of the Mughal court and to Mecca in more modern times; Jinnah was the son of a trading petty bourgeois, from the Gujarati-speaking Khoja minority among Muslims,



and from the then-provincial town of Karachi. Jinnah's entire legitimacy as an intellectual came from the Lincoln's Inn, Azad's from traditions of learning in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu. Azad knew little English, Jinnah knew little besides English. Law had been the vocation of each: English Law for Jinnah, Islamic *Fiqh* for Azad. When in the 1910s Azad was speaking of a universal Islamic nation (*qawm*) with its 'political centre' in Constantinople, Jinnah was being called 'the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity'. When Azad was arousing passions on behalf of the Osmanli dynasty of Turkey as the last remaining bastion of Islam, Jinnah referred to that same Khilafat, contemptuously, as 'an exploded bogey'. And, if Azad thought of the Khilafat movement as a grand political awakening of the Indian Muslim masses, Jinnah thought of it as a wave of hysteria brought about by the dying social stratum of Muslim theological elite and utilised by Gandhi—very cynically, Jinnah thought—to establish himself as the unchallengeable leader of India generally and in the Muslim constituency especially. They, Azad and Jinnah, had never seen eye to eye; that much was clear enough. But, as the 1920s progressed, their respective roles began reversing, in ways not at all predictable from their respective careers up to that point. As Azad shot to power and prominence in the central leadership of Congress first in the Khilafat years and then again after 1936, he came to represent the Congress Muslims surely, first in the company of men like Ansari and then uniquely all by himself, as their unquestionable sole leader; but he was also a key leader of the national movement as such, along with Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru, behind Gandhi. Jinnah never had been in the centre of things to the same extent, nor did he recover his national stature after Khilafat; instead, he sulked on the sidelines for some years, in his London retreat for some more years, and then re-modelled himself into the leader of the Muslim sectional interest.

He who never tired of referring to his birth in Mecca came to represent the non-denominational, composite, secular nationhood of all India; he who had cut his professional teeth in the law firms of Bombay and whose own cut of clothes matched those of Mountbatten came to declare, in a peculiar blend of communal sectarianism and European theories of cultural and linguistic nationalisms, that the denominational difference of Hindus and Muslims constituted a *national* difference. It is one of the great paradoxes of modern Indian history that traditions of Islamic piety, from Azad to the Deoband *ulama*, eventually found their way into composite cultural and political nationalism; theories of modernization, as taught in the British and proto-British institutions, from Lin-

coln's Inn to Aligarh, begat, on the other hand, communal separatism. To this paradox, we shall return in a different text. Suffice it to say that what Jinnah understood was something crucial about what colonial capitalism had wrought in the Indian polity: that he could bypass the entire trajectory of bourgeois nationalism on the one hand, the communist movement on the other, by appealing directly to the structurally weak Muslim segment of the Indian bourgeoisie and to the professional interests of the more ambitious sectors of the Muslim petty bourgeoisie, in tandem with British partisanship and patronage. If they could obtain a brand new state, that weak segment could become the new ruling class, and the educated middle class could staff the new civilian and military bureaucracies, becoming what Engels once called the 'governing caste'. This Jinnah's 'two-nation theory' promised them and eventually delivered to them in the shape of a Partition. The vision of religious ecumensim and of a culturally composite India which Azad evolved in his maturer years had room neither for such class opportunism, nor for such fundamental division of common ethos and common civilizational patrimony, nor such collusion with British design. For that essential decency, despite his defeat, Azad shall be in posterity chiefly remembered.

## NOTES

1 I use the awkward phrase, 'nationalist Muslims as they were represented in the Indian National Congress' in more or less the same sense in which Mushirul Hasan uses the simple term 'Congress Muslims' in, for example, his recent *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India 1885-1930* (Delhi, Manohar, 1991). The longer phrase is used here for a certain emphasis. There were also great many *nationalist* Muslims who did not join the Congress. Many more worked primarily in or around the Communist Party than is generally recognised; some others went into smaller parties of various types; an incalculable number did not join any party because of more or less equal discomfort with League policies and the presence of substantial Hindu communalist forces inside the Congress. It is also crucial to realize that the vast majority of Muslims—indeed, of all Indians—neither belonged to any political party nor had any opportunity, until after Independence, for electoral expression of their will, thanks to the extremely restricted nature of the franchise, even in 1946.

2 For the text of the Address, see Malik Ram (ed.), *Khawab-e Azad* (Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1974). The significance of the Address shall be discussed below.

3 See, for a fuller discussion of this point, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: Weidenfeld and

Nicolson, 1982).

4 In this 'period' I include all his writings between the founding of *Al-Hilal* itself and the writing of *Qaul-e-Faisal*, thus including *Al-Balagh*, *Tazkira*, the articles and addresses of the Khilafat movement, and so on.

5 Publishing houses in Karachi and Lahore, like Maqbool Academy and Dasta Publishers, have brought out literally tens of collections of Azad's essays, culled from *Al-Hilal*, *Al-Balagh*, and sundry lesser known journals, as well as numerous editions of *Tazkira* and *Masala-e Khilafat*. It is also significant that the full file of *Al-Hilal* was re-printed in a modern, multi-volume, well-bound edition in Pakistan well before the Indian reprint.

6 See Qazi Javed, *Sir Syed se Iqbal tak* (Lahore: Book Traders 1975).

7 No adequate translation of the term, *umma-wahida*, is really possible. Azad later took to translating it simply as *mattahida qaumiyyat*, with the emphasis falling both on nationalism and on *ittihad*, meaning 'unity'. But that is something of an interpolation. The translation of *umma* as 'nation' is of course in keeping with the exigencies of the modern nation-state, but 'people'—even in the generic sense of 'human species'—would be closer to the etymological root; in the strictly religious discourse of Islam, meanwhile, the term connotes a sense of 'community', mainly of shared belief, as in *Ummat-e Rasul*, i.e., community of the Faithful held together by a shared belief in the Prophethood of Mohammad. *Wahida*, meanwhile, carries the literal sense of 'united', but Azad cites the case of a *treaty* between Muslims and non-Muslims, concluded by the Prophet of Islam, as the basis of his conception. The 'unity' implied in the term, then, has the sense of an 'alliance'. The context, usage and consequences of this conception shall be discussed presently, in the main body of this text.

8 I.H. Qureshi, the late doyen of right-wing historiography in Pakistan, is notable for having emphasised the break between Azad's earlier period and the latter, locating the break, as I do, in 1922. But his reading is almost exactly the opposite of mine, for he eventually sees the latter period of Azad's life in terms of a betrayal of Indian Muslims. See I.H. Qureshi, *The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, 610-1947* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962).

9 See, for characteristic examples of this trend among very diverse writers, Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, *Zikr-e-Azad* (Calcutta: 1959 Reprint, Delhi: Maktab-e-ishaat al Quran, 1965); Humayun Kabir, *Muslim Politics, 1906-47* (Calcutta, 1969); M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967 and Delhi, 1985); Malik Ram, *Kuch Abul Kalam Azad Ke Bare Main* (Delhi, 1989); the chapter on Azad in Rajmohan Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind*, (Delhi: Penguin 1987); or the latest and in some ways the best—though far too unquestioning—biography of Azad by V.N. Datta, *Maulana Azad* (Delhi: Manohar, 1990).

10 Ian Douglas is critical and contentious, and he might have provided a refreshing contrast to the kind of hagiography one often gets in the name of

biography, but he is unable, finally, to deal sympathetically with Azad's religious ideas, possibly because of his own prior location in Christian theology and the preoccupations that follow from that location. See L.H. Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography* (eds.), Gail Minault and C.W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

11 The main liturgical formulation, the *Kalima Tayyaba* without which none is considered by the pious as a Muslim, runs as follows in English: 'I give witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Mohamunad is Allah's Prophet'. Pressed in Aurangzeb's court to recite the *Kalima* on pain of death, Sarmad uttered the opening phrase: 'I give witness that there is no God . . .', then stopped. Threatened again with beheading, he simply said: 'I have reached the first stage only, that of negation; let those who have seen what cannot be seen speak the rest'. Then bowed his head for the sword to fall, and composed the following magnificent couplet:

*shor-e-shud wa az khwab-e adam chashm kishudem*  
*Didem ki baqi ast shab-e-fitna, ghunudem*

The sword of course fell.

As one reads Azad's lyrical and passionate account of this episode in the 1910 essay, one is scarcely prepared for the extremist piety that surfaces soon thereafter, in the *Al-Hilal* decade.

12 His early adoption of the pseudonym 'Abul Kalam' (literally, 'Father of Theology')—which he had taken already in 1903 when he brought out the very first issue of *Lisan al-Sidq*—is significant in relation to this ambition of composing, before the age of thirty, a master treatise of sweeping proportions. Then, it was in November 1915 that *Al-Balagh* had first announced the impending publication of the *Tarjuman* along with two other multi-volume works—*al-Bayan fi al-Maqasid Al-Quran* and *Muqaddama-e-Tafsir*—for which immediate subscriptions were sought. In the event, the latter two works were simply dropped. There were all kinds of stories about the *Tarjuman* having been started, half-completed, fully finished at various points, and parts of it being destroyed by the police or lost by unreliable assistants. It is likely that there actually were some unfortunate incidents at the time of Azad's internment in Ranchi and subsequent imprisonment at the height of the Khilafat movement; it is also likely that some stories of the work having been done at an earlier date are exaggerated. The two published volumes which eventually came in the 1930s offer translation and somewhat unsystematic commentary on roughly half of the Quran.

13 Azad is said to have written a favourable treatise of indeterminable length on Sirhindi during his internment days in Ranchi, just about the same time when he wrote *Tazkira*. There is in fact a very long list of Azad's writings of that internment period which are said to have disappeared when Azad's trusted lieutenant of those days, Fazluddin Ahmad, the man chiefly

responsible for the writing and publication of *Tazkira*, precipitately left Calcutta. There had apparently been a falling out. The alternative version is that the police kept taking away and returning his papers throughout that internment and the subsequent imprisonment, with much writing getting lost in the process. Given the ambiguity surrounding the many writings of Azad which do exist in print, one can never be entirely sure of details.

14 The scheme was at best the product of an over-active imagination. Azad was then barely thirty years old, with no major work of either *Fiqh* or *Kalam* to his credit. Nor did he belong to any of the major seminaries (e.g., Deoband, Firangi Mahal, Nadwa). In the Khilafat movement itself, he was only one of several main leaders (e.g., Ansari, Ajmal Khan, the Ali brothers, Maulana Mahmud Hasan himself who was still alive until 1920). This is quite aside from the fact that Indian Islam since at least the early Mughals had had no institution of that kind, nor could there be one. The rule of the Muslim dynasties in India was absolutist but non-theocratic, i.e., they never had a ruling order of a clergy on the pattern of either medieval Christendom or even the *mevleviat* (organised under the office of *Shaikh al-Islam*) in Osmanli Turkey. Broad diversity of sects and seminarian traditions among Indian Muslims, including principally the Shia-Sunni divide, made such an institution inconceivable.

15 It is curious that Azad's life as a journalist never quite took shape, even though much of his fame as a writer and thinker rests on his work in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*. All in all, he was associated in an editorial capacity with no less than twelve journals during the twenty-five years between 1903 and 1928, usually for a very few months, never for as much as three years. This is in sharp contrast with Gandhi whose journalistic writings, in both English and Gujarati, were persistent and prodigious, even though he was hardly ever seen as a journalist.

16 In his biography, V.N. Datta makes the point that the reason why Azad did not revive his projected work on the *Tarjuman* during the Ahmednagar years was that he needed great many scholarly references which he could not obtain in prison. The point is well taken. But we still do not know why the volume III which was scheduled for publication in 1937 never appeared; why Azad never even tried to return to that work, in or out of prison; why in all the letters of *Ghubar-e-Khatir* he never expresses the desire to resume that work or any regrets at being unable to do so. Azad had the reputation of a great scholar. It is significant that his most enduring work of Urdu prose, undertaken in the years of maturity and accomplished over two years, is an exercise in the epistolary art, a minor genre.

17 *India Wins Freedom*, (The Complete Version. Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), p. 248.

18 Jawaharlal is said to have rendered the Ramgarh Address into English and Azad wrote him a letter thanking him for the accuracy. The curious thing about the Urdu text as we find it in the definitive edition, however, is that there are entire passages in it, especially some of the ones summarised in our

own text here, which simply lack the characteristic voice and inflection that a knowledgeable reader would normally associate with Azad's own prose. Such passages actually read much more like a very competent translation of Nehru's own English. The exact relationship between Azad's and Nehru's voices, as these voices are embedded in the texture of the Urdu prose of this Address, is far from clear.

19 In his introduction to *Tazkira*, Malik Ram states the matter with the greatest delicacy: the whole book is written, as he puts it, as if 'he [Azad] is getting ready to assert a very special claim'. What Malik Ram means of course is that the whole majestic narration of his ancestors' great courtly eminence, as key theologians and educators under the Mughals, was to implicitly demonstrate that Azad was eminently deserving, even by lineage, of being declared the *Imam al-Hind* by common consent. In this context, the closing pages on his own life of 'drunkenness and sexual excess' carry a very different kind of significance. Sulaiman Nadwi, a well-known theologian and an associate of Azad during the *Al-Hilal* days, had already made public his knowledge of Azad's more profane pleasures. The concluding pages, acknowledging all that without conceding any point of actual fact, was a way of putting the whole matter in the past and pre-empting hostile attacks.

20 See, for the violence of Azad's language during this period, 'Masala-e-Islam' and other essays selected from *Al-Balagh* and reprinted in *Nigarishat-e Azad and Mazaameen-e Balagh* (Lahore: Maqbool Academy, n.d.).

21 Mushurul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India*, p.119.

22 Some of these developments shall be discussed later in our text, in Section V.

23 Azad's own account of his family lineage in *Tazkira* shows his ancestors coming from Herat in the early days of the Mughal Empire and living uninterruptedly in Delhi until his grandfather (mother's uncle) and father set out for Mecca via Bhopal. There is reason to believe that his grandfather had moved to Delhi from Qasur, a township near Lahore, to join the pietistic circle around Shah Abdul Aziz, the son of Shah Waliullah, who had done the first Urdu translation of the Quran. When Azad announced the imminent publication of the *Tarjuman* in 1915, he specifically cited Shah Abdul Aziz as the Quranic scholar and translator whose work his own was going to supersede—a rather large claim to make, within the traditions of Islamic piety, for someone without any significant work of Quranic scholarship to his name—but he never mentioned that his own grandfather was the disciple of that same man.

24 This is the reason he gives for the adoption of the pen-name 'Azad' in *India Wins Freedom*, recounting his life in such a way that the decision appears to have been taken in the years of his 'doubt' after he had come across the works of Sir Syed and had, according to himself, started reading English. This dating is patently false. It is also significant that (a) the 'Prospectus' in this book mentions Azad's discovery of Syed Ahmad Khan's work but not his repudiation of it during the *Al-Hilal* decade and beyond, and (b) he mentions

sectarian differences among Muslims as the only direct cause of his 'doubt' and 'crisis'. Even *Tazkira* and *Ghubar-e-Khatir* had been less misleading. Sir Syed had been directly blamed there for the 'crisis' because it was his writings which had created the doubts and the doubts had led to virtual renunciation of religion; the '*Ilhad*' of the Aligarh school was, as we know, one of main themes of the *Al-Hilal* period. Meanwhile, the crisis, which according to epistle 11 of *Ghubar-e-Khatir* lasted for a decade between the ages of fourteen and twenty four, is related in both the Urdu books not to frustration at sectarian differences but much more directly to his surrender to all kinds of earthly pleasures, presumably love, sex, wine, and so on.

25 Malihabadi attributes this point to Azad himself. See *Azad Ki Kahani*, p.240. Other biographers have also remarked on this practice and Azad's adoption of the pen-name for that reason.

26 For what it is worth, the Malihabadi text portrays Azad's mother actively disliking the Urdu language and the Indian people generally.

27 The accounts of this refusal to inherit the status of *pir* are also unclear, though. There is reason to believe that the countrywide travels which Azad undertook between 1902 and 1906, after the age of fifteen, in connection with his journalistic work, were connected also with visiting the circles of his father's *murids* in different parts of the country, as son and possible successor of the *pir*. That he rejected the pressure to assume that position in 1909 is unquestionable, but with the launching of *Al-Hilal*, the establishment of *Dar al-Irshad*, the aborted attempt to create a countrywide network under the organisational name of 'Hizb-e Islami', the despatch of emissaries to various parts of the country to obtain *Bait* (the *murid's* vow), and the culmination of all this in the bid to get accepted by congregations of the *ulama* as *Imam al-Hind*, seems to suggest that the local pressures of 1909 were resisted but then revived on a much larger scale.

28 Malik Ram, *op.cit.*, pp. 262-3.

29 Some of the biographical accounts are truly careless. Mustafa Kamil was a charismatic Egyptian leader and founder of the first major political party there in the aftermath of the occupation of 1882, bourgeois and mildly nationalist and in dire competition with the Islamic formations which eventually coalesced around Rashid Rida and his *Salaffiya* movement. Azad mentions having met some of Kamil's followers. Since the name of Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish leader, is better known in India, however, some biographers have sometimes collapsed the two names.

30 Khaliq Anjum, *op. cit.*, p.109.

31 Datta, *Maulana Azad*, p.23.

32 This too is problematic, however. On the same page of *Tazkira* Azad says that the 'episode' occurred nine years before the date of the writing. According to Fazluddin Ahmad Mirza, who was responsible for the whole venture of the writing and publication of the book, *Tazkira* was written between June and October of 1916. That would suggest that the 'episode' occurred in 1907. It

is possible, of course, that the rhapsodic account of the 'episode' was written two years after the drafting of the rest of the book, in 1918, but there is no firm evidence of that either. Difficulties of this kind only go to show how impossible it is to speak of 'facts' about this whole phase of Azad's life.

33 In *India Wins Freedom* Azad suggests that he had learned enough English in his middle teens, very much on his own, to start reading books. Hasrat Mohani's testimony claims that he first learned English much later, in Alipur prison. The actual extent of this knowledge is unknown, great many suggestions of the enthusiastic biographers notwithstanding. Mahadev Dessai's *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Biographical Memoir* (2nd edition, Agra, 1946) is characteristically misleading on this count.

34 In his *Al-Balagh* articles and then throughout the Khilafat movement, Azad had consistently countered criticisms of Osmanli despotism by saying—and quoting Imam Ghazali to the effect—that life under the worst kind of oppressive Khalifa is better than a single night without a Khalifa.

35 Literature on developments in modern Turkey, even for the approximate one hundred years that elapsed between the abolition of the Jan-nissar Force in 1826 and the abolition of the Khilafat in 1924, is truly vast. The following may be consulted for general information: Feroz Ahmed, *The Young Turks* (Oxford, 1969); Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal, 1964); Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire* (London, 1973); Norman Iskowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago, 1980); Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford, 1968); Binnaz Sayari (Toprak), *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden, 1981); R.E. Ward & D.A. Rustow, *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey* (Princeton, 1964). Among individual articles, the following may be particularly useful: Halil Inalcik, 'Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire', in *The Journal of Economic History*, March 1969; Serif Mardin, 'Religion in Modern Turkey', *International Social Science Journal*, XXIX, no 2, 1977; D.A. Rustow, 'Politics and Islam in Turkey', in R.N. Frye (ed.), *Islam and the West* (The Hague, 1957); Annemarie Schimmel, 'Islam in Turkey', in A. J. Arberry (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East* (London, 1969); and A.L. Tibawi, 'Islam and Secularism in Turkey Today', *Quarterly Review*, London, 1956.

36 Rida's influence on Azad's intellectual formation seems to have been decisive and lasted far beyond the *Al-Hilal* decade, since the philosophical influence of Rida's unfinished *Tafsir*, which covers rather less than half of the Quran, can be seen in the *Tarjuman* itself, which covers rather more than half.

37 Literature on these Arab developments is, if anything, even more vast than on Turkey. For general familiarity, one could begin with Albert Hourani's classic *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Oxford, 1962) and go on to the useful *Modern Islamic Political Thought* by Hamid Enayat (London: The Macmillan Press, 1982). Supplementary readings might include Ali H. Dasouki & Alexander Qudsi (eds.), *Islam and Power* (London, 1981);



Samir Amin, *The Arab Nation* (London, 1978); Georges Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London, 1936); Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World* (New York, 1982); Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism* (Austin, 1979); Nikkie R. Keddie (ed.), *Scholars, Saints and Sufis* (Los Angeles, 1972); R.P. Michel, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (London, 1969); Maxime Rodinson, *The Arabs* (Chicago, 1981), and *Marxism and the Muslim World* (New York, 1981); Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West* (Baltimore, 1970); J.H. Thompson & R.D. Reischauer (eds.), *Modernization of the Arab World* (Princeton, 1966); and Charles Wendell (ed.), *Five Tracts of Hassan al-Banna, 1906-1949* (Berkeley, 1978).

38 In his *Al-Balagh* articles in particular, Azad spoke at length and with definite pride about his own absolute pan-Islamism, using the term in declarative, triumphalist tones, asserting with characteristic aplomb that not to be a pan-Islamicist would be contrary to Quranic injunction and Prophetic *Hadith*, therefore amounting to heresy. It was only in the post-Khilafat days that he quietly dropped the whole rhetoric.

39 M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography: The Story of My experience with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1957).

40 *Ibid.*, p. 449.

41 *Maqalat-e Sir Syed* (Lahore, 1962), vol. 4, pp. 260-71.

42 Azad's essay on 'The Proposed Shia College' makes remarkable reading, in the context of this tie between his anti-colonialist passion on the one hand and, on the other, his fundamentalist fury against religious liberality at Aligarh.

43 See, for some interesting comments on this issue, Sumit Sarkar's essay 'The Pattern and Structure of Early Nationalist Activity in Bengal' in his *Critique of Colonial India* (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1985).

44 Aziz Beg, *Jinnah and His Times*, cited in Datta, *Maulana Azad*, p.136.

## Glossary and Explanatory Notes

**Al-Manar** ("The Beacon"), a journal which appeared in Cairo from 1898 to 1940. The journal subscribed to the reformist line of the *salafiyya*; this movement of cultural resistance towards colonial encroachment sought to restore to Islam its former power and to re-establish confidence in its traditional values. The *Manar* was the personal work of one man, the Syrian scholar Syed Rashid Rida (1865-1935). He was, over the course of the years, to include in the journal a number of articles by Jamahuddin Afghani (1839-1897) and Mohammad Abduh (1849-1905).

**Asrar-e Khudi** (Secrets of the Self) was a *masnawi* of the poet Mohammad Iqbal (1876-1938). It was in Persian and was published in 1915. A second *masnawi*, complementing the first one, *Rumuz-e Bekhudi*, was published three years later. Iqbal put forth a new doctrine of the Self and rejected the ideas of self-surrender, of quietism and of languishing nostalgia. The *Rumuz-e Bekhudi* (the mysteries of the Not-Self) was concerned with the role of the individual in the Islamic community.

**Bang-e Dara** (The sound of the caravan-bell) was a collection of Urdu poems of Iqbal. It was printed in 1923.

**fiqh**, originally "understanding, knowledge, intelligence", has become the technical term for jurisprudence, the science of religious law in

**Islam.** In Islam all aspects of public and private life and business should be regulated by laws based on religion; the science of these laws is *fiqh*.

**ghazal** is one of the three most important poetic forms, besides the *qasida* and *masnawi*. It is a short lyric poem consisting of couplets independent of one another in meaning, but bound by a strict unity of form, that is, a uniform metre and a rhyming scheme AA, BA, CA, DA, etc. The predominant, though by no means the sole theme, of *ghazal* is love. The word is in fact derived from a root which means approximately "conversation between lovers".

**Ghubar-e-Khatir** ("The Dust of Memories") was a collection of letters addressed by Abul Kalam Azad to Nawab Sadar Yar Jung Bahadur, Maulana Habibur Rahman Khan Sherwani, who had been co-editor of *Al-Nadwa* with Maulana Shibli Nomani (1857-1914) in Lucknow, back in the days when Azad was also there. He wrote the letters during his imprisonment in Ahmednagar Fort from 1942 to 1945. The twenty-four letters, according to V.N. Datta, represent the finest and richest values of Mughal culture. At the same time, the *Ghubar-e-Khatir*, according to the same writer, "lacks *Al-Hilal's* passionate power, *Al-Balagh's* elevated tone and *Tazkira's* weight of scholarship presented in grandiose diction. *Ghubar-e-Khatir* echoes the *Tarjuman* on religious themes and is akin to it in lucidity and simplicity of expression".

**Hadith** is used for Tradition, being an account of what the Prophet of Islam said or did, or of his tacit approval of something said or done in his presence. The study of Tradition is called *Ulum-e Hadith*. In Islam Tradition came to be considered second in authority to the Quran. The Shias, of course, have books of their own, accepting only Traditions traced through the family of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad. Thus a number of Traditions were cited to support Ali's claim to Khilafat, which, according to the Shias, was usurped by the first three khalifas. This is a familiar theme in the *majalis* held every year to mourn the martyrdom of Husain at Karbala.

**ijma**, the third and in practice the most important, of the bases of Islamic religious law. Technically, it is "the unanimous doctrine and opinion of the recognised religious authorities at any given time". According to Iqbal, *ijma* was "the most important legal notion in Islam", though it remained practically "a mere idea, and rarely assumed the

form of a permanent institution in any Muhammadan country”.

**ijtihad**, literally “exerting oneself”, is the technical term in Islamic law, first, for the use of individual reasoning in general and later, in a restricted meaning, for the use of the method of reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*). Rashid Rida saw *ijtehad* as a “life-force” in religion.

The question of *ijtihad* and *taqlid* (see below) continued to be discussed by Muslim scholars in India. From the 18th century onwards, individuals and schools of thought advocated a return to the pristine purity of Islam, such as the *Salafiyya*, who may be called Reformers. There were others, especially from the last quarter of the 19th century onwards, who laid emphasis on renovating Islam in the light of modern conditions. They are described as modernists. Azad replaced the concept of *ijtihad* by that of *tasis* (reconsolidation), arguing that in modern times what was needed was not free or new legal speculation, but a consolidation of what he interpreted as Islam's fundamental verities which would externalize the perfection inherent in it. Iqbal supported the Turkish National Assembly's exercise of *ijtihad* in regard to the institution of Khilafat. See Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, pp. 175-76; For Iqbal, see Aziz Ahmad and G.E. Von Grunebaum (eds.), *Muslim Self-Statement in India and Pakistan, 1857-1968* (Otto Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1970), p.143.

**Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen**, “the Muslim Brethren”, a Muslim movement, both religious and political, founded in Egypt.

**Ilm al-Kalaam**, one of the religious sciences of Islam. The term is usually translated, as an approximate rendering, “theology”. Abduh defined *Ilm al-Kalaam* as being “the establishment of religious beliefs and the explanation of prophecies” in order to “seek to conserve and establish religion”.

**Imam al-Hind** (religious/spiritual leader of the Indian Muslims), was the title Azad sought to assume. But his plans, brought to light by Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi and Ghulam Rasul Mehr, fell through because of serious opposition from the *ulama*, including those who were his close associates during the Khilafat movement. However, Azad continued to emphasise (see translation of *Masala-e Zakat* above) the importance of electing an *Ameer* or an *Imam al-Hind*.

**Kalima**, literally “The Word”. The Creed of a Muslim. (*La Illaha*

*Illallah Muhammadun Rasul Allah*). The recital of the *kalima* is the first of the five foundations of pillars of practice.

*Lisan al-Sidq*, an Urdu journal published after the closure of *Ahsan al-Akhbaar*. Azad started it when he was only fifteen. Between November 1903 and July 1904, seven issues of *Lisan al-Sidq* appeared, with 500 to 600 subscribers. Although Azad commented, as he looked back on it twenty years later, that "this was only a childhood game", it was a high standard literary and social journal. See I.H. Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, pp.58-59.

*mujaddid*, "regenerator" of the faith and the *Sunna*. For example, Ahmad Ibn. Taymiyya, the *mujaddid* of the seventh century. Rashid Rida noted with regret that such exceptional men were generally alone and often the butt of authoritarian arrogance, worldly scepticism and the hostility of conformist *ulama*.

*mushaira* is a poetic symposium at which poets of the day recite their poems. In India, Qutub Shah Quli, ruler of the Deccan, held *mushairas* at his famous capital, Golconda. See Akhtar Qamber's English translation of Farhatullah Beg's "Dehli ki Aakhri Shama" *The Last Mushairah of Delhi* (Orient Longman: Delhi, 1979).

*Mutazila* is the name of the theological school which created the speculative dogmatics of Islam. The school originated with Wasil b. Ata and Amar b. Ubaid of Basra; the period of their activity covered the region of Khalifa Hisham and his Umayyad successors, i.e., the years 723-48.

*Naya Shiwa* is Iqbal's "melodious lyric of syncretic nationalism" (Aziz Ahmad). According to Mohammad Mujeeb, "there is deliberate non-conformism in this poem which reminds one of the sharp attacks on Kaaba-centred religiousness. But we could also say that there is piety here rather than passion, tranquillity rather than intensity". Mujeeb's translation of *Naya Shiwa* is as follows:

I shall tell the truth, O Brahman, but take it  
not as an offence:  
The idols in thy temple have decayed.  
Thou hast learnt from these images to bear  
ill-will to thine own people,

And God has taught the (Muslim) preacher  
 the ways of strife.  
 My heart was sick: I turned away both from  
 the temple and the Ka'bah,  
 From the sermons of the preacher and from  
 the fairy tales, O Brahman.  
 To thee images of stone embody the divine—  
 For me, every particle of my country's  
 dust is a deity.  
 Come, let us remove all that causes estrangement,  
 Let us reconcile those that have turned away from  
 each other, remove all sings of division.  
 Desolation has reigned for long in the  
 habitation of my heart—  
 Come, let us build a new temple in our land.  
 Let our holy place be higher than any on the earth,  
 Let us raise its pinnacle till it touches the  
 lapel of the sky;  
 Let us awake every morning to sing the sweetest songs,  
 And give all worshippers the wine of love to drink.  
 There is power, there is peace in the songs of  
 devotees—  
 The salvation of all dwellers on the earth is in love.

*The Indian Muslims*, pp. 485-86.

rabubiyat presents Azad's theory based on the exegesis of the sura  
*al-Fatiha*. It is, in the words of Aziz Ahmad, "a process of tender  
 or careful nourishment providing from moment to moment, stage to  
 stage all that one needs to gain the fullest possible development". See  
 Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism*, pp.177-79.

shariat, the law, including both the teachings of the Quran and the  
*Hadith*.

Shikwa (Complaint) and *Jawab-e Shikwa* were two outstanding poems  
 of Iqbal. *Shikwa* (English translation by Altaf Husain, *Complaint and  
 Answer*, Lahore, 1943) is a hymnic complaint to Allah on the social  
 and political plight of the Muslims.

shirk, "Idolatry: polytheism". Ascribing plurality to the Almighty, e.g.,

ascribing knowledge to others than God, ascribing power to others than God, offering worship to created things; the performance of ceremonies which imply reliance on others than God. See T.P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam*, p.579.

**tafsir** in Islam means the commentaries on the Quran and the science of interpreting the revealed book. This branch of learning is a special and important branch of *Hadith* and is taught in madrasas all over the world.

**Tanzimat**, a term used to denote the reforms introduced into the government and administration of the Ottoman Empire from the beginning of the reign of Sultan Abdul Majid. The *tanzimat* were a continuation of the work of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) and Mahmud II.

**tariqa**. "A path". It is applied to sufi orders, as well as the path followed by them to reach gnosis. *Tariqa* denoted in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. a method of moral psychology for guiding the individuals who had a mystic call. After the eleventh century, it became the system of rites for spiritual training laid down for the common life in the various religious orders which began to be founded at this time.

**Tarjuman al-Quran** was Azad's unfinished commentary on the Quran. The first volume was published in 1931. The *Tarjuman* is, according to Mujeeb, "the product of deep personal conviction, of belief unpolluted by any extraneous considerations. It is, perhaps, the finest example of the constructive thinking enjoined on the Muslim". *The Indian Muslims*, p. 460.

**taqlid**, literally "Winding round" in the sense of blind acceptance and following of the *shariat*.

The reformist criticism of *taqlid* is aimed both at mindless conformism and the deliberate support given to social and political structures which prevent progress and personal initiative in the name of static vision of religion and culture. For the *muqallid*, religious life is merely the expression of acquired habits and the passive acceptance of the status quo; their worship is reduced to verbal formulae which have no profound meaning; and religious rites dwindle to mechanically repeated acts. In this light, *taqlid* is the opposite of the spiritual and ethical demands made by the Quran.

**tasawwuf**, "the practice of wearing the woolen robe"; hence the act of devoting oneself to the mystic life on becoming a sufi.

**Tazkira**, an autobiographical account written by Azad at the insistence of Fazluddin Ahmad Khan, who had acted as Manager in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh*. Azad started work on the book in June 1916 and completed it by 17 October of that year. The book was published in September 1919.

**ulama** refers to those learned in Islam; sometimes translated as the "Muslim clergy".

**wahdat al-wujud**, the ideal of the Unity of Existence, expounded by Ibn al-Arabi, as opposed to *wahdat al-shuhud*, the Unity of Phenomena. The exponent of the *wahdat al-shuhud* idea in India was Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a contemporary of Akbar and Jahangir, the Mughal Emperors. Sirhindi was the chief inspiration behind several revivalist and "fundamentalist" movements in the nineteenth century.

**wahdat-e Adyan**, or "the oneness of religion" was central to Azad's religious thought. He regarded the concept as "the great principle" which was "the foundation of the message of the Quran". The idea of the oneness of religion is another distinguishing feature of his commentary on the *Sura' al-Fatiha*.



## Index

Abu Bakr (d. 634 A.D), the first Khalifa, 45, 49

Abduh, Shaikh Mohammad (1849 - 1905), 9, 11, 21, 61, 79, 84, 88, 133, 147, 148, 159; renounces pan-Islamic nationalism, 162; 167

Abdul Aziz, Shah (1746 - 1824), 130

Afghani, Jamaluddin (1839 - 1897), as symbol of reformist tradition, 9; —'s perception of organic link between Islam and composite nationalism, 11; Azad's reading of, 22; and pan-Islamism, 61; liberal and reformist writing of, 79; 88, 116, 147; Azad's familiarity with the writings of, 149; 154; origins and early development of, 155 - 56; ridicules Syed Ahmad Khan's pro-British stance, 156, 158; 159, 162; ends up as a courtier of Sultan Abdul Hamid, 166; *see also* Azad, Abul Kalam; pan-Islamism; Khan,

Syed Ahmad

Ahmad, Fazluddin 142

*Al-Balagh* (Calcutta : 1915 - 1916), 9, 10, 125, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 170 n. 12, 171 n. 15, 172 n.2, 174 n.34; articles on pan-Islamism in, 175 h.38

*Al-Hilal* (Calcutta : 1912 - 1914), 9, 10, 21, 22, 24, 25; and co-operation with Hindus, 24, 26 n. 13; 30, 35; phase and revivalist tenor of Azad, 63; Sulaiman Nadwi on, 79; style of, 80; article on Islam in, 83; Azad on *taqlid* in, 84; perspective in the years, 89; 102, 104; Azad on the study of Quran, 106; manifesto of the period, 107; 112, 113, 116, 117, 118, 119; decade of Azad's life, 123; 124, 125; and close of decade, 126; apocalyptic prose of the decade, 127; 128, 129, 130, 131; focus on mobilizing Indian Muslims against the British government, 132; stri-

- dencies of the decade, 135; 137, 140, 146; polemics of, 147; 148, 149, 153, 154, 155, 159, 160, 162, 164, 165, 171 n.15, 172-3 ns. 25, 27
- Ali brothers 23, 24, 79, 112, 157, 171 n.14; *see also* Ali, Mohamed
- Aligarh 4, 6, 12 n.3; college at, 79, 80, 81, 157, 161; 85, 108, 155, 159, 168, 173 n.24; movement, 2, 12n.3
- Aligarh college (M.A.O.) 2; graduates of, 79, students of, 93; 157, 160
- Aligarh Muslim university 2, 6, 12 n.3, 78, 107
- Al-Manar* (Cairo), Arabic journal, 2, 22, 149, 163
- Ali, Mohamed (1878 - 1931), 2, 3; speech at Round Table Conference by, 5, 8, 9; and Azad 78-9, 112; early career of, 80-81; on Quran and Islam, 81, 82, 83, 97 and n. 40; and Islamic heritage, 82-3; —'s attempt to reconcile pan-Islamism with nationalism, 84-5; on Gandhi, 85, 87, 97 n.60; and pan-Islamism and Khilafat 85, 86, 87; — Azad divide, 88, 89, 90; reacts to abolition of Khilafat 89; and the Nehru Report, 89-90; 96 ns. 4, 6; meeting with Iqbal, 96 n. 21; Nehru on, 98 n. 50; 154; *see also* Ali brothers; Quran; pan-Islamism; Azad, Abul Kalam
- An Nadwa*: *also*, *Al-Nadwa* (Lucknow), 20, 26 n. 8
- Ansari, M.A. (1880-1936), 1, 2, 3, 5; on inter-community co-operation, 6, 7, 9; All-India Nationalist Muslim Party founded by, 10; 13ns. 9, 11, 14 n. 21; death of, 24; 90, 91, 92, 117, 122, 126, 167, 171 n.14
- Arab nationalists 22, 24, 63
- Aurangzeb (1658-1707), Mughal emperor, 37, 66, 125, 170 n.11
- Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam (1888-1958), mausoleum of, 1; 2, 4, 5; as a 'Nationalist Muslim', 7; as *Amir-e Karawan*, 8; Jawaharlal Nehru on, 8, 9, 10; at the centre of nationalist movement, 11; place of in the struggle for freedom, 12; 14 n. 21; birth of, 15n. 28; intellectual and religious biography of, 15 n. 29, 17; Nehru on —'s mind, 15-16 n.32; —'s enigmatic personality, 17; writings on and by, 18-19; influence of Shibli Nomani on, 20-21; —'s involvement in swadeshi and revolutionary movements, 21, 146; and his travel to West Asia, 21, 61, 146-150, 152, 153-55; advocates co-operation with and resistance to the raj, 22-3, 24; —'s reaction to the collapse of Khilafat, 24, 88; essay on Sarmad, 28-31; on Sarmad, 33-40; and on Sarmad's martyrdom, 38; on unity of religions, 32, 134; *see also* *Wahdat-e-Adyan*; —'s address before the British court, 41-2; liberative element in —'s theology, 45; and essay on *Masala-e-Zakat*, 45-8, 58; —'s personal quest, 62; self-confidence and sense of elation exuded by, 63; 64; 'seduced' by pan-Islamism, 65-6; —'s perception of Aurangzeb, 66; —'s universalism or *Wahdat-e-deen*, 67; denounces *taqlid*, 68; favours and advocates *ijihad*, 69, 70, 71; conflict and convergence in the ideas of Mohammad Iqbal and, 72, 73; on Indian Muslims and country's liberation, 74 n.13, 84; I.H. Douglas on —'s

pan-Islamism, 74 n.27; on Hindu-Muslim unity, 74 n.21; ideological discourse of, 77; and the Mahatma (Gandhi), 77-8; in the role of Jesus, 78; early life and public career of, 61, 79-80, 120 n.32, 143-44, 145-46; -'s journalism, 81, 82; begins writing *Tarjuman al-Quran*, 83; role of Islam as conceived by Mohamed Ali and, 83; regards *taqlid* as the greatest hindrance to intellectual progress, 84; reconciles pan-Islamism with Indian nationalism, 84; draws upon the Quran and *Hadith* to justify Hindu-Muslim unity, 84; in the post-Khilafat period, 87-8; - Mohamed Ali divide, 88; on Khilafat and its abolition, 88; shift in -'s framework of analysis, 89; -'s break with Mohamed Ali, 89-90; as Congress president and negotiator with Cripps and Cabinet Mission, 91-5; his conduct during Cabinet Mission praised by Wavell, 91; writes to Cripps, 91-2; Campbell-Johnson on, 92, 95; and the Muslim League, 93-4; M.A. Jinnah on, 93; differs with Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, 99 n.60; and the British government, 106-7, 133; and the *Imarat-e Sharia*, 108-110; Mohamed Ali on, 112; and the *Tarjuman al-Quran*, 126, 127, 133, 134, 135; translation and exegesis of Quran by, 101, 102, 103; understanding and interpretation of Quran by, 104-5, 113, 114-117, 122; *see also Tarjuman al-Quran*; Islam; Jawaharlal Nehru compares Jinnah with, 117; assessment of, 118-19; -'s concept of Hindu-Muslim unity, 113; on Hindu-Muslim unity, 120 n.39; *see also* Hindu-Muslim unity; Ramgarh speech (address), 91, 122,

126, 127, 130, 165; Pakistan's representation of, 123-4; Shibli No-mani's influence on, 125; status as a Urdu writer, 123; shifts in -'s career, 124-28; periodisation of 'essential' trajectory of -'s life, 129-30; -'s structure of religious sentiment, 130-31; on Gandhi's *ahimsa* and -'s *Wahdat-e Adyan*, 135-37; return of to India, 144-45; travels to Turkey, 153-55; and Syed Ahmad Khan, 153-63; limitations of, 166-67; and Jinnah, 168-68; *see also* Calcutta; Dar al-Irshad; Douglas, I.H.

Aziz Ahmad, historian, 3, 68; on Azad's "uncompromising indifference" to *ijma* and *ijtihad*, 69

Bambooque, Wilayat Ali (1885-1918), 79, 81

Cabinet Mission 25, 91, 92, 98 n.60

Calcutta Azad and the "political underworld" in, 21; Urdu weekly in, 24; Azad's father resents in, 61; political arena in, 79; journalistic assault in, 80; Azad's statement on pan-Islamism in, 107; Azad arrives in, 144; 128, 148, 149, 153, Hindu College in, 160, 171 n.13

Chhindwara 78, 85; *see also* Ali, Mohamed

Christianity 44, 45

Civil disobedience (movement), 87 (1922); 10, 90, 92 (1930)

*Comrade* (Calcutta: English weekly), 80, 96, ns. 4, 21, 155; *see also* Ali, Mohamed

Congress, Indian National *see* Indian National Congress

Congress-League coalition 92

Congress Muslims 92, 93, 94; *see also*  
Nationalist Muslims

Cripps, Stafford (1889-1952), 91, 92,  
■

Dar al-Irshad 11, 80, 164, 173 n.27

*Dar-us-Saltan* (Calcutta : Urdu  
Weekly), 21, 148

Das, C.R. (1870-1925), 88

Datta, V.N., (b.1928), historian, 8, 45,  
110, 120 ns.28 and 32; on Azad's  
visit to West Asia, 148; on Azad's  
'love episode', 149; 169 n.9, 171  
n.16

Douglas, L.H., (1920-1975), historian,  
8; biography of Azad by, 15 n.29;  
intellectual and religious biogra-  
phy of Azad by, 17; skirts the issue  
of Shibli Nomani's influence, 20;  
takes issue with Pakistani histori-  
ans, 22; gap in -'s book, 24; -'s  
life of Azad, 25, 26; provides  
"genetic" understanding of Azad's  
life, 28; explores the phase (1908-  
1910) of Azad's life, 30; on Azad  
and his political "enemies", 41;  
45, 63, 72, 169-70 n.10

Egypt 148, 149, 159

Gandhi, M.K. on the "staunch nation-  
alists" at Jamia Millia Islamia, 2;  
historian's use of, to reconstruct  
India's nationalist past, 4; as "Na-  
tionalist Hindu" (7), 7; Azad as -  
's chief lieutenant during civil  
disobedience, 10; 13 n.9, 14 n.21,  
77, 78; Mohamed Ali writes to, 82;  
and Mohamed Ali on, 85, 87, 88, 89;  
Mohamed Ali on -'s civil disobe-

dience, 90; and the Congress Mus-  
lims, 92; 93, 94, 95; and Azad, 98  
n.60, 112, 113, 118; killed by a  
Hindu fanatic, 119; -'s satyagrahus,  
126; 129, 134; as a secularist, 135;  
- 's ahimsa, 136, 137, 138; recruits  
for the British Army, 156; 163,  
167, 171 n.15

Ghalib, Asadullah Khan (1797-1869),  
130, 157, 164, 165

Ghazali, Imam al- (1058-1111), 105,  
174 n. 34

*Ghubar-e-Khatir* 10, 95, 122, 127, 130,  
134, 137, 140, 144, 145, 146, 147,  
164, 165, 171, n.16, 173 ns. 10,  
11

Gokalp, Ziya (1876-1924), 9, 151

*Hadith* 23, 46, 47, 62, 84, 89, 104,  
105, 131, 175 n.38

Hali, Akbar Husain (1837-1914), 125, 145

Halide Edib (1884-1964), 2, 6

*Hamdard* (Delhi : Urdu Weekly), 154

Hamid, Sultan Abdul (1842-1918), 151,  
153, 155, 166

Hanbal, Imam Ibn (780-855), 35, 36

Hasan, Maulana Mahmud (1851-1920),  
5, 171 n.14

*Hayat-e Sarmad* (Shaheed), 29, 123;  
*see also* Sarmad

Hinduism 135, 138, 139

Hindu-Muslim (unity) 11, 85, 108,  
110, 111; Azad on, 113; (co-  
operation) 40; (amity) 84; Syed  
Ahmad Khan on, 160; and the  
Khilafat days, 163

Holy Places 85, 86, 112

- Ibn al-Arabi (1165-1240), 67, 134
- Imam al-Hind* 126, 129, 154, 166, 172 n.19, 173
- Imarat-e Sharia* 109, 120 n.28
- India Wins Freedom* 18, 127, 128, 141, 143, 145, 148, 149, 153, 165, 172 n. 23, 174 n.33
- Indian Islam 3, 4, 62, 126, 134, 171 n.14
- Indian Muslims 1, 21, 23; and abolition of Khilafat, 24; 46, 63, 65; decline of, 71; 78, 89; and the Congress, 92, 93, 94; 106, 107, 108, 110, 131, 132, 150, 154; and extra-territorial loyalties, 163; 164, 166, 169 n.7., 171 n.14
- Indian National Congress 5, 8 and "Nationalist Muslims", 14 n.1, 168 n.1; 24, 78, 84, 85, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92; Muslims in, 92-3; 100, 123, 129; Syed Ahmad Khan and, 161; 166, 167
- Indian National Union 10, 112, 113
- Indian nationalism 4; majoritarian view of, 7; 11, 32, 78, 79; reconciling pan-Islamism with, 84-5; 91, 123
- Indian nationalist movement 24, 122, 123, 161
- Iqbal, Mohammad (1876-1938), 1, 7, 8; Azad and, 59-60; -'s encounter with the world outside India, 61-62; -'s *Shikwa* illustrative of pessimistic spirit, 63; -'s mood of "self-pity and praise" in *Bang-e Dara*, 64; -'s commitment to pan-Islamism, 65-6; on *tawhid* and *wahdat*, 67-8; on *ijma* and *ijtihad*, 68-9; on the liberating role of *ijtihad*, 70; see also Azad, Abul Kalam; on law and morality as instruments of communal change, 71; in the tradition of Ibn Taymiyya, 72; and Azad's encounter at the Anjuman-e Humayat-e Islam, 73 n.2; on nationality, 75 n.29; and the spirit of *Naya Shikwa*, 74 n.25; and the Khilafat, 88; meeting with Mohamed Ali, 96 n.21
- Islam symbols of 5; 6, 11, 23, 25, 31, 32, 55; on charity and alms-giving, 49-50; 52, 53, 54; and capitalism 56; 57, 58, 60, 61, 71; and Azad's world-view, 77; 78; Mohamed Ali and 81-2, 83; Holy Places of, 85, 86, 88, 89, 107, 112, 127, 130, 135, 136, 159, 164
- Jamaat-e Islami 5, 117, 123; in Pakistan, 162
- Jamia Millia Islamia 1, 3, 6, 97 n.21
- Jazirat al-Arab* 86, 132
- Jinnah, M.A. (1876-1948), 1, 4, 41, 60; and the Muslim League, 93-4; on Azad, 93; 94, 100, 101, 118, 119, 123, 155; and non-co-operation, 163; and contrast with Azad, 166-67; and 'two-nation theory', 168
- Kaaba 19, 39
- Kabir, Humayun, 18, 127, 141, 142, 143
- Kamal, Mustafa (1881-1939), 152, 153, 162, 173 n.29
- Khairuddin, Maulana (1831-1908), 128, 143, 146, 148
- Khalifa 23, 86, 100, 111, 131, 132, 153, 174 n.34; see also Turkey
- Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1891-1989), 3, 5, 95, 166
- Khan, (Hakim), Ajmal (1863-1927),

- 2, 3, 5, 7; Jawaharlal Nehru on, 13 and ns. 9-10; 171 n.14
- Khan, Syed Ahmed (1817-1898), and his renowned associates, 2; perceived as founder of "Muslim separatism", 3; 7; as mentor of Azad, 9; writings of, 12 n.3; 79; and the study of Quran, 104, 105; 117; Azad on reading the writings of, 145; -'s influence on Azad, 146; and Azad's rejection of -'s thought, 147, 148; shifting relations between Azad's thought and that of, 150; pro-colonial loyalism of, 154; on the differences between Afghani and, 155; see also Afghani, Jamaluddin; Afghani's criticism of, 156, 158; Azad's relationship with, 159, 160; and the Congress, 161; 162, 163; Azad's shifting relations with, 165, 166; 172-3 n.24
- Khan, Zafar Ali (1873-1956), 5, 79
- Khilafat in the aftermath of, 9; campaigns, 10; Turkish, 11; institution of, 23; abolishing the, 24; institution of under the Umayyads, 51; under stress, 52; 84; Mohamed Ali and, 85-6; Turks abolish the, 87; demise of, 88, 89; Azad's statement on, 107-8, 109, 110; Azad and the abolition of, 111; 117, 118; Azad's speeches and writings on, 119; convergence of non-co-operations with, 129; 148; Indian Muslims and the fate of Osmanli, 150; revival of, after *Tanzimat*, 151; decline of, 153; propagating the idea of Osmanli, 156; Syed Ahmad Khan's hostility towards, 158; Syed Ahmad Khan and, 161; 162; Jinnah and, 163, 167; 174 n.35
- Khilafat movement 5, 22, 23, 24, 25, 108, 112, 113, 119, 123, 126, 129, 150, 162, 163, 167, 171 ns. 12, 13, 174 n.34; see also Khilafat; pan-Islamism; Turkey
- Khwaja, A.M. (1883-1962), 5, 14 n.21
- Kidwai, R.A. (1894-1954), 4, 5
- Kifayatullah, Maulvi (1875-1952), 5
- Kitchlew, Saifuddin (1884-1963), 5, 85; as organiser of *tanzim*, 118
- Lahore 1, 3, 172 n.23
- liberation theology 44, 47
- Lisan al-Sidq* (Calcutta: Urdu periodical), 110, 120 n. 32, 124, 125, 145, 155, 159, 165, 170 n.12
- Lucknow 20
- Mahmad, Syed (1889-1971), 5, 14 n.21, 117, 118
- Malihabadi, Abdur Razzaq (1895-1959), 18, 24, 30, 113, 141, 142, 143, 144, 165, 173 ns. 25, 26
- Malik Ram, author, 8, 124, 140, 144; -'s introduction to *Tazkira*, 172 n.19
- Masala-e Khilafat wa Jazirat al-Arab* 23, 113
- Masala-e Zakat* 45, 49, 58
- Maudoodi, S.A.A. (b 1903), 103, 117
- Mecca 31, 32, 38; Azad born in, 61; 144
- Medina 25, 31,
- Minault, Gail, historian, (b.1939) 2, 4, 15 n.29, 66, 120 n.28
- Mohammad, Prophet 49, 60, 45, 47 (of Islam), 83, 88, 103, 104, 110, 116 (of Islam), 131, 134, 169
- Mohani, Hasrat (1877-1951), 79, 174 n.33
- Mujeeb, Mohammad (1902-1985), 2, 13, n.10, 19, 29, 66; on Azad, 78

- Muslim League, All India 5, 11; scheme of, 25; 91, 92, 93, 122
- Muslim separatism 3, 109
- Mutazilite 35, 103, 131, 158
- Nadwat al-*ulama* 30, 79, 125, 159
- Nadwi, Syed Sulaiman (d.1954), 21, 79, 172 n.19
- namaz/salat* 45, 49
- "Nationalist Muslims" 3, 6, 7, 92, 94, 117, 118, 168 n.1
- Nehru Committee Report 10, 87, 89, 90, 126, 163; *see also* Ali, Mohamed
- Nehru, Jawaharlal (1889-1964), 2, 4, 7; compares Azad with French Encyclopaedists, 8; describes Azad as an 'emblem of India's unity', 10; on Hakim Ajmal Khan, 13 n.9; and the Congress Muslims, 14 n.21; describes Azad as *Amir-e Karawan*, 15 ns. 27, 32; 58, 78; Mohamed Ali's loyalty to, 87; Azad inspired by, 88; 89; on Mohamed Ali's politics, 90; 92; on Mohamed Ali in *An Autobiography*, 98 n. 50; finds something amiss with Azad's creative genius, 117; on Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali (1888-1953) in Ahmednagar jail, 117-18; 128, 164, 166, 167; translates Azad's Ramgarh address, 171-72 n.18
- Nehru, Pandit Motilal (1861-1931), 10, 90, 112
- Nizami, Khwaja Hasan (1878-1957), 30
- Nomani, Shibli (1857-1914), 9; and Azad, 20-1; 30, 79, 81, 82, 103, 104, 105, 125, 159; *see also* Nadwat al-*ulama*
- Non-co-operation (movement) 2, 23, 24; in the aftermath of, 87; at the height of, 113; 118, 129, 163; *see also* Khilafat movement
- Paigham* 24
- Pakistan 1, 12, n.3, 25, 41, 100; resolution, 122; 123, 155, 162, 169
- Pan-Islamism 7, 9; as a weapon against imperialism, 61; Azad and Iqbal seduced by, 66; upsurge, 78; Indian nationalism and, 84-85; rejection of, 87; Azad preaches, 100; Azad's first elaborate statement on, 107; Azad's of the *Al-Hilal* period, 127; and nationalism, 151; passions, 154; of the Afghani kind, 155; Abduh renounces, 162; and political thrust, 164; 165, 175; *see also* Khilafat; Khilafat movement; Afghani, Jamaluddin
- Partition (August 1947), 3, 25; plan for, 95; 118, 123, 136, 161, 163, 166, 168
- Pasha, Enver 151, 152, 153
- Pasha, Mustafa Kamil (1874-1908), 61, 147, 148, 173 n.27
- Patel, Vallabhbhai (1875-1950), 4, 7, 60, 92, 167
- Qaul-e-Faisal* 37, 126, 127, 129
- Quran 10, 22, 23, 35, 36, 44, 45, 46; on *zakat*, 49-57; 66, 67, 68, 71, 72, 81, 82, 83, 84, 89; Azad's translation and exegesis of, 101; 102, 103; Syed Ahmad Khan and the study of, 104; Azad's understanding of, 105, 113, 114; 110, 134, 164, 170 n.12, 172 n.23, 175.

- Rajagopalachari, C.R. (1878-1972), 4, 92
- Ramgarh address at, 10, 122, 126, 127, 165, 171 n. 18; 88
- Ranchi 83, 109, 124; internment in, 142; 162
- Roy, Raja Rammohun (1772-1833), 7, 157, 158
- Rida, Mohammad Rashid (1865-1935), 9, 11, 21, 79, 147, 149, 152, 159, 162, 166, 173 n. 29
- Robinson, Francis, historian, (b.1944), 2, 12, 85, 120 n. 28
- Round Table Conference 5, 90
- Sarmad (executed 1660) 19, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37; martyrdom of, 38, 39; 123, 125, 126, 131, 134, 137, 170 n. 11
- Sayani, M.R. 5, 93
- Shariat 24, 52, 53, 72, 86, 111, 115, 125, 126, 132, 137, 151, 153, 159
- Shikoh Dara (1615-1659), 36, 37, 38, 125
- Sindhi, Ubaid-Allah (1872-1944), 5, 116, 117
- Sirhindi, Shaikh Ahmad (1564-1624), 125, 134
- Sufi 31 (quest for divine love), 33, 36, 125; orders, 134; *see also* Sarmad; Sufism
- Sufism 20, 60, 67, 71; metaphysical doctrines of, 72
- swadeshi movement 9, 21; Azad and, 79; 80
- Tagore, Rabindranath (1861-1941), 7
- Tarjuman al-Quran 10, 24, 29, 35, 38, 40, 59, 79, 101, 115, 116, 122, 124, 126, 127, 133, 134, 135, 138, 140, 155, 164, 170 n. 12, 171 n. 16
- Tanzimat 133, 150, 159, 162
- Taymiyya, Ibn (1263-1328), 36, 69, 72, 131, 133
- Tazkira 18, 19, 20, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 66, 119, 129, 140, 141, 142, 146, 149, 165, 170-71 n. 13; Malik Ram's introduction to, 172 n. 73; Azad's family lineage in, 172 n. 23, 173 n. 32
- Troll, C.W., historian, (b.1937), 2, 4, 15 n. 29; essay on Sarmad by, 19; 66; *see also* Sarmad
- Turkey 84, 85, 87, 107, 111, 131; Sultan of, 132; 133, 147, 148, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 163, 164, 166, 167; Osmanli; 171 n. 14; literature on, 174 n. 35
- Turks 87, 88, 89; abolition of Khilafat by, 111; 150
- Tyabji, Badruddin (1844-1906), 5, 93
- ulama 11, 19, 40, 47, 63, 71, 73, 80; of Bareilly, 93; 126, 129, 150, 152, 154, 157; of Deoband, 167; 173 n. 27
- umma al-wahidah 60, 66, 123, 132, 169
- Urdu 122; Azad's status as a writer in, 123; 130, 136; journal *Aaj Kal*, 139; 144, 145, 149; prose from Ghalib to Premchand, 164; 171, 173 ns. 24, 26
- Vakil (Amritsar : newspaper), 21, 148
- Wahdat-e-adyaan 134, 135, 136, 138, 165



*Wahdat-e deen* 8, 40, 67

*Wahdat-al-Wajud* 134, 138

Waliullah, Shah (1703-1762), 69, 125,  
158, 172 n.23

Young Turks 61; movement, 147;  
148, 151

*Zakat* 45, 46, 47, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53,  
54, 55, 56, 57, 58; *see also* *Masala-*  
*e-Zakat*

Zakir Husain (1897-1969), 3